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WASHTENAW
# JEWISH NEWS

February 2012 Shevat/Adar 5772 Volume XXXVI: Number 5 FREE

# JCS hosts Tu B'Shevat celebration at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

*Renee Bayer, special to the* WJN

Tu B'Shevat, which takes place in late January or early February, signals the beginning of spring in Israel. But here in Michigan, with our trees and soil lying dormant covered in snow, spring seems a long way off. That's why the Jewish Cultural Society (JCS) invites the entire community to our annual Tu B'Shevat Celebration on Sunday, February 5 from 10 a.m. to noon in the lush, green oasis offered by the Matthaei Botanical Gardens.

Tu B'Shevat is a minor Jewish holiday but one filled with meaning and delight. "Since the first JCS event in February 2004, Tu B'Shevat in the Matthaei Botanical Gardens has become a warm and fun place for the entire community to appreciate our interconnectedness with the natural world and begin making plans for spring," says JCS member Seth Penchansky who coordinates the celebration, "This event is designed for all ages, adults and families."

The festivities will include:

- a scavenger hunt in the conservatory to learn about plants with ancient historical significance,
- an interactive non-profit fair with local experts on the environment and local foods,
- demonstrations, activities, and crafts,
- a presentation on the state of the Huron River and the Great Lakes, and
- a Tu B'Shevat seder sampling nuts and fruits from trees to symbolize the Earth's gifts and environmental awareness.

Have you wondered if your children's products, pet toys, and everyday household items contain toxic chemicals like lead, cadmium, or mercury? Here's your chance to find out. The Ecology Center will have an XRF testing device, which immediately detects toxic heavy metals in consumer products. Bring in your items and Ecology Center staff will test them for free.

Leslie Science and Nature Center will be on hand with Birds of Prey that swoop, screech, hoot and soar. Other confirmed exhibitors include the Huron River Watershed Council, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, the Michigan Bluebird Society, the city of Ann Arbor's Natural Areas Preservation, Recycle Ann Arbor and more.

In the education wing, a presentation for adults will feature Andy Buchsbaum, executive director of the Great Lakes Regional Center of the National Wildlife Federation, and other local experts. The session, titled "Healing the Great Lakes or Does Asian Carp Make Good Gefilte Fish?", will describe the precarious state of the Great Lakes ecosystem and promising models of recovery emerging from in the Huron River watershed.

PHOTO BY JULIE GALES

**Sophie Kirchmeier, a preschooler in the JCS Sunday School, takes a break from Tu B'Shevat activities and sits with some of the beautiful biodiversity that makes up the Matthaei Botanical Gardens.**

Tu B'Shevat, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat, is a holiday also known as the New Year for Trees and the Jewish Arbor Day. The word "Tu" represents the number 15 in Hebrew.

It is said to be the day that the sap begins to flow in the fruit trees in Israel. Just like other Jewish holidays, Tu B'Shevat has undergone changes over the centuries. In ancient times, the holiday marked the beginning of a new tax year in Israel when the tithe for the produce of fruit trees was calculated. Special laws were in place to protect fruit trees in times of war and ensure that trees were mature enough for harvesting. In the 1600s, the kabbalists (Jewish mystics) developed a Tu B'Shevat seder (ordered service) where the fruits and trees of the Land of Israel were given symbolic meaning for the purpose of bringing human beings and the world closer in spiritual perfection.

*continued on page 2*

# 2011 Genesis Humanitarian Award Recipient

*Helena Robinovitz, special to the* WJN

Irene Butter, who is no stranger to accolades in her work in the public health field over the years, felt especially honored to be recognized for her humanitarian work as the 2011 recipient of the Genesis Humanitarian Award. Accepting the award this past November at the Erev Thanksgiving Service, Butter stated, "I am not only surprised but overwhelmed. This is far more than I deserve because all the projects and activities mentioned have their own intrinsic reward…. TBE and St. Clare together formed Genesis and it is Genesis that has created so many opportunities to work together to enhance our community."

Jim Downward, president of Genesis, presented the award commenting, "…one nominee stood out, having received 21 nominations. These nominations contained story after story of how the actions of the nominee had affected the lives of others and made this world a little bit better."

**Irene Butter**

Two people who wrote letters supporting Butter's nomination include two friends who worked with her to raise the endowment to establish the Raoul Wallenberg Medal and Lecture Series at the University of Michigan. They wrote, "You do not tell Irene that something cannot be done…. When she believes in something she is steadfast." The president of the university later admitted that he and his professional fundraising staff were astonished

*continued on page 30*

# Camp Raanana moves to new location

*Shoshana Jackson, special to the* WJN

Camp Raanana, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor's outdoor summer day camp, has outgrown its home for the past 16 years at Independence Lake and is moving to a new location. Starting in the summer of 2012, Camp Raanana will be located on Cedar Lake in Chelsea, Michigan. While there are so many wonderful memories over the years at Independence Lake, there is great excitement for the opportunity to hold Camp Raanana at a facility so beautifully wooded. The Cedar Lake facility is part of the Waterloo Recreation Area, much of which will be accessible to the campers. From stately pine forests to the sandy beach, Cedar Lake offers children full immersion in the out-of-doors.

Part of the excitement about this move stems from the birth of a new partnership with the Michigan United Conservation Corps (MUCC), to further Jewish values such as *tikkun* olam (repairing the world) and

**Cedar Lake has swimming, boating and fishing access**

*baal tashchit* (do not destroy). The MUCC promotes stewardship and sound ecological practices through education and outreach programs, bringing youth to the out-of-doors and helping people from all walks of life un-

*continued on page 2*

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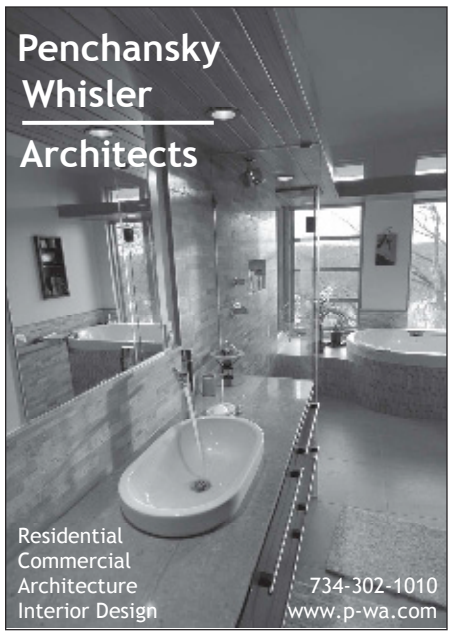
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# Community

## *Camp Raanana, continued from page 1*

derstand the interplay between humankind, the land, and the animals which inhabit it. The JCC is very enthusiastic about partnering with an organization that has such experience in the outdoors and is willing to share their space and expertise with us.

Camp Raanana's new space on Cedar Lake has a sandy waterfront with swimming, boating and fishing access. Shabbat celebrations each week will be held around the fire ring in the amphitheatre overlooking the lake. All campers, from entering Kindergarteners through Counselors-in-Training entering 10th Grade, will be able to try their hands at archery and boating. Nature activities can take place in such varied environments such as a grassy field, a shadowy pine forest, a bog, the lake, and all of the delightful "transition places" where one type meets the next. It is here where bugs and birds and animals are most likely to be seen. Camp Raanana campers will develop an appreciation for the flora and fauna that live here in Michigan.

In addition to this change of location, Camp Raanana is also making a few program changes. Most dramatically, the program day has been extended: it is now from 9 a.m.–5 p.m., in an understanding of the dilemma of working families. Camp Raanana is the only day camp program in the Ann Arbor area to offer continuous programming this late into the evening. This will provide families ample time to work during the summer weeks before collecting their children at the end of the day. Should families need care earlier in the morning or later in the evening, pre- and post-camp care will continue to be offered, which extends the camp day from 7:30 a.m. through 6 p.m. At Camp Raanana, each family's responsibilities are important, and the program makes it easy to meet them.

Also new this year, Camp Raanana will offer a single week-long overnight program during 7th Week (August 6–10). This week is the perfect introduction to sleep-away camp: a familiar site with old friends and favorite staff! For this program, campers will check in at the JCC at 8:30 a.m. on Monday and will be picked up at the JCC between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday. Campers may select a 3-day option and will be picked up at Cedar Lake between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Wednesday. 7th Week Overnight will include three meals per day, overnight lodging in a bunk-house and full-day programming.

Further, Camp Raanana will offer a melding of Judaics with the outdoors: campers will be able to bake challah each Friday, either using the kitchen in the lodge at Cedar Lake or by trying out different campfire cooking techniques such as reflector ovens or foil-wrapped baking.

Camp dates for summer 2012 are June 25–August 24. Camp registration opens in early February and brochures will be available at the JCC and at www.CampRaanana.com. For more information, visit the website or contact Camp Director Shoshana Jackson at shoshanajackson@jccfed.org or 971-0990. ■

## *Tu B'Shevat, from page 1*

In modern times, the holiday has been marked in Israel by planting trees. On kibbutzim, it is observed as an agricultural holiday. The Tu B'Shevat seder has been revived, and is now celebrated by many Jews, secular and religious. Today the holiday is taking on new meaning as Jewish organizations, including the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) have connected Tu B'Shevat to issues of sustainability and environmental awareness. "Today, as our hectic lives are filled more and more by electronics, Tu B'Shevat provides a compelling reminder to all Jews to reconnect with nature and recommit to a creating a sustainable future for ourselves and our children," commented Julie Gales, JCS *madrikha*. "Ann Arbor's Matthaei Botanical Garden is the perfect place to celebrate Tu B'Shevat and the JCS is thrilled to be able to host this community-wide event each year."

The event is free, however donations for individuals and families are accepted. Metered parking on site is $1.20 per hour, free for Matthaei Botanical Garden members. ■

WASHTENAW JEWISH NEWS

2935 Birch Hollow Drive
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108
voice: 734/971-1800
fax: 734/971-1801
e-mail: WJN.editor@gmail.com
www.washtenawjewishnews.org

**Editor and Publisher**
Susan Kravitz Ayer

**Calendar Editor**
Claire Sandler

**Advertising Manager**
Gordon White

**Design and Layout**
Dennis Platte

**Staff Writer**
Sandor Slomovits, Rochel Urist

**Contributing Writers**
Mara Abramson, David Alpert, Renee Bayer, Jonathan Cohn, Karen Freedland, Noah Gallagher, Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Linda Gradstein, Ben Harris, Eric Herschthal, Peretz Hirshbein, Shoshana Jackson, Ron Kampeas, Dan Klein, Kimberly Kunoff, Fran Martin, Alice Miller, Soo Ji Min, Matan Naamani, Debra Nussbaum Cohen, Merrill Poliner, Andrea Rosner-Najer, Mae Sander, Rabbi Sid Schwarz, Hannah Sherman, David Shtulman, Dina Shtull, Elliot Sorkin, Tom Tugend, Brett Willner

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**The deadline for the March 2012 issue of the *Washtenaw Jewish News* is Tuesday, February 7.**
**Publication date: Thursday, February 27**
Extra copies of the *Washtenaw Jewish News* are available at locations throughout Washtenaw County.

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# Federation announces Impact Fund grants

*By David Shtulman*

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor announced the winners of the first-ever Jewish Community Impact Fund grants in December. With input from community online voting and a community-based selection committee, the Federation is funding five new, innovative grants for a total of $39,000.

"Each award represents a new addition to the richness of Jewish life in Ann Arbor," says Federation President Edward Goldman. "We sought to encourage people from throughout our community to submit proposals that would touch the lives of our community members in new ways. And that's just what these winners will do."

Through Community Voting, online voters (which recorded a total of 1,590 votes spread among the 23 proposals) selected two projects:

### *Israel Fellow at University of Michigan/ Ann Arbor Community —$10,000*

Hillel at the University of Michigan will engage an Israel Fellow (*shaliach*) for the 2012/13 academic year to strengthen Israel's place on campus, engage with students and other community members who are interested in visiting or learning about Israel and expanding the number of Jewish youth and students visiting Israel. Twenty percent of the Israel Fellow's time will be dedicated to working with the broader Jewish community. "It's so important for us to have an Israeli voice on staff to work with students before, during and after their Israeli experiences" said Hillel Director Tilly Shames, referencing the 6,000 Jewish students on the U-M campus.

### *Celebrating History With Our Stories—$10,000*

Beth Israel Congregation, in recognition of their 100th anniversary, and that of organized Jewish life in Ann Arbor, will create an oral and video record of the Ann Arbor Jewish community based on the NPR StoryCorps model and will archive all the interviews and additional information on a new website created for that purpose. Rabbi Robert Dobrusin explained, "Members of Beth Israel and the Jewish community at large will share their experiences through their own stories of Jewish life in our community. We will use audio, video and other media to fully capture the unique nature of our community."

The Federation Selection Committee made three additional awards:

### *Sukkah Arbor—$10,000*

Sukkah Arbor is a project of several community members who are architects or in the building industry with the support of local congregations. The project is a regional competition to use creative and sustainable design-build techniques to reimagine the *sukkah* while staying true to *halachic* standards. The *sukkot* will be assembled and displayed at the JCC during the Sukkot holiday where each one will become a center for educational, spiritual and charitable purposes. "We're hoping to bring together the Jewish and wider community to celebrate, appreciate and learn about the wonderful tradition of Sukkah building" explained project member Josh Bloom.

### *Teen Leadership Council—$6,000*

The JCC Teen Leadership Council program will recruit youth leaders ages 13–18 to engage in leadership and board training, manage a small budget to fund teen-based activities, and raise funds for TLC programs. The Council will include representatives from various local congregations and seek connections with other community-based Jewish organizations. During the school year, it will meet monthly and at least once during the summer months. Local teen leader Ari Axelrod explained "This is a very exciting opportunity. Something the Teen Council is really going to focus on is bridging all the teen organizations in the Jewish community of Ann Arbor together to connect in a way that is different from Facebook, email and Twitter."

### *Parent Education Series: Raising a Jewish Child—$3,000*

Hebrew Day School, in collaboration with the JCC Early Childhood Center, Beth Israel Congregation and Temple Beth Emeth, will offer a four-session series on raising a Jewish child for expecting parents and young parents with infants and preschool age children. The program will be modeled on the Federation Salon program, with speakers on topics such as ceremonies for welcoming a child into the world and celebrating Jewish holidays and rituals at home with social opportunities for connecting with other young parents. The target audience will be those with limited affiliation with the Jewish community, or those with early signs of affiliation to encourage sustained connection with the Jewish community. Dina Shtull, head of school at HDS, thanked the Federation for recognizing that "young parents need and want to connect to one another and are actively thinking about the Jewish culture. They are aware their decisions will have both a short and a long term impact."

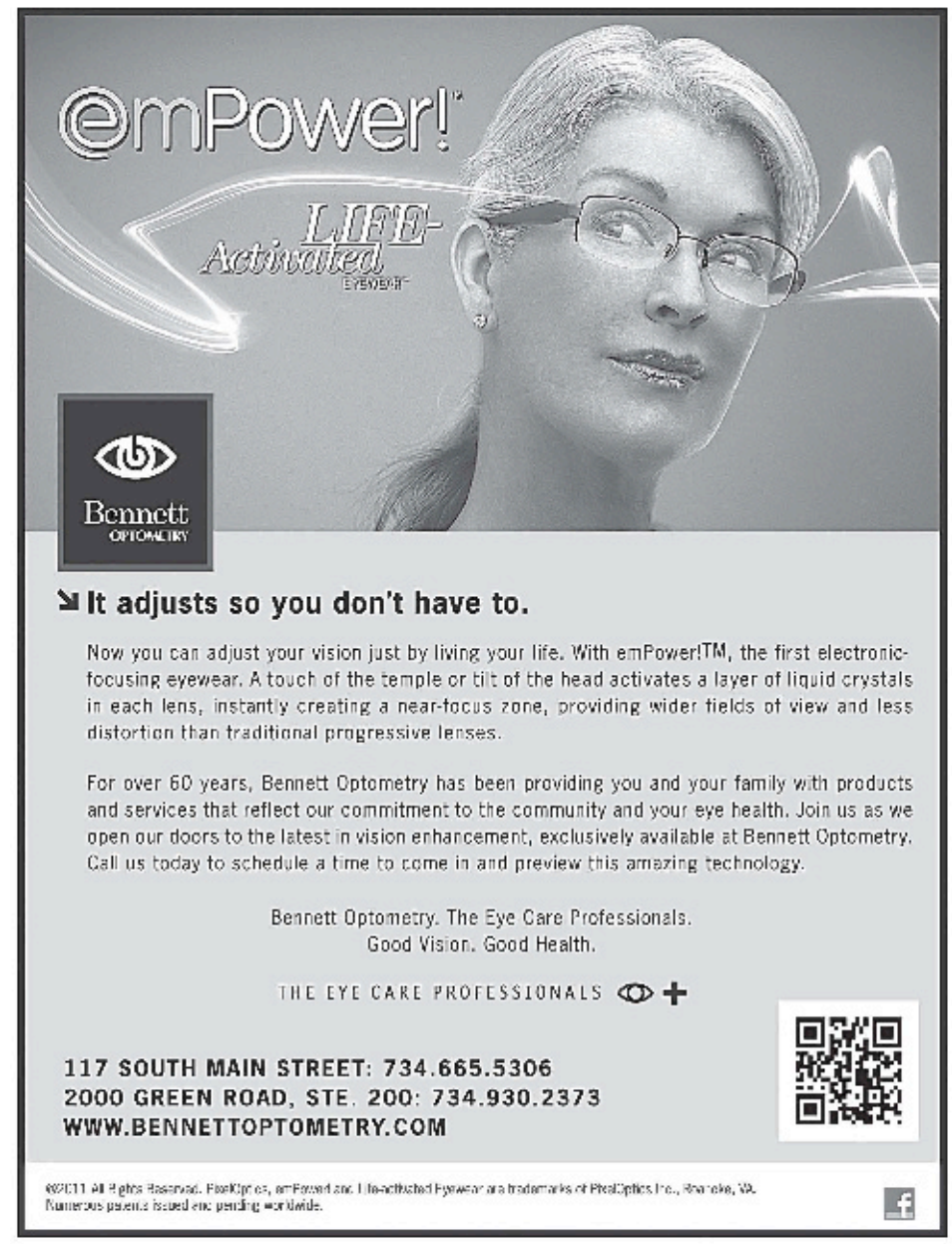
In all, the Federation received 23 proposals from throughout the community totaling $177,230. The intent of the Impact Fund is to encourage programs that support outreach and engagement with new populations, expansion of services for segments of the Jewish community that are underserved and improved responsiveness to unmet needs of the community.

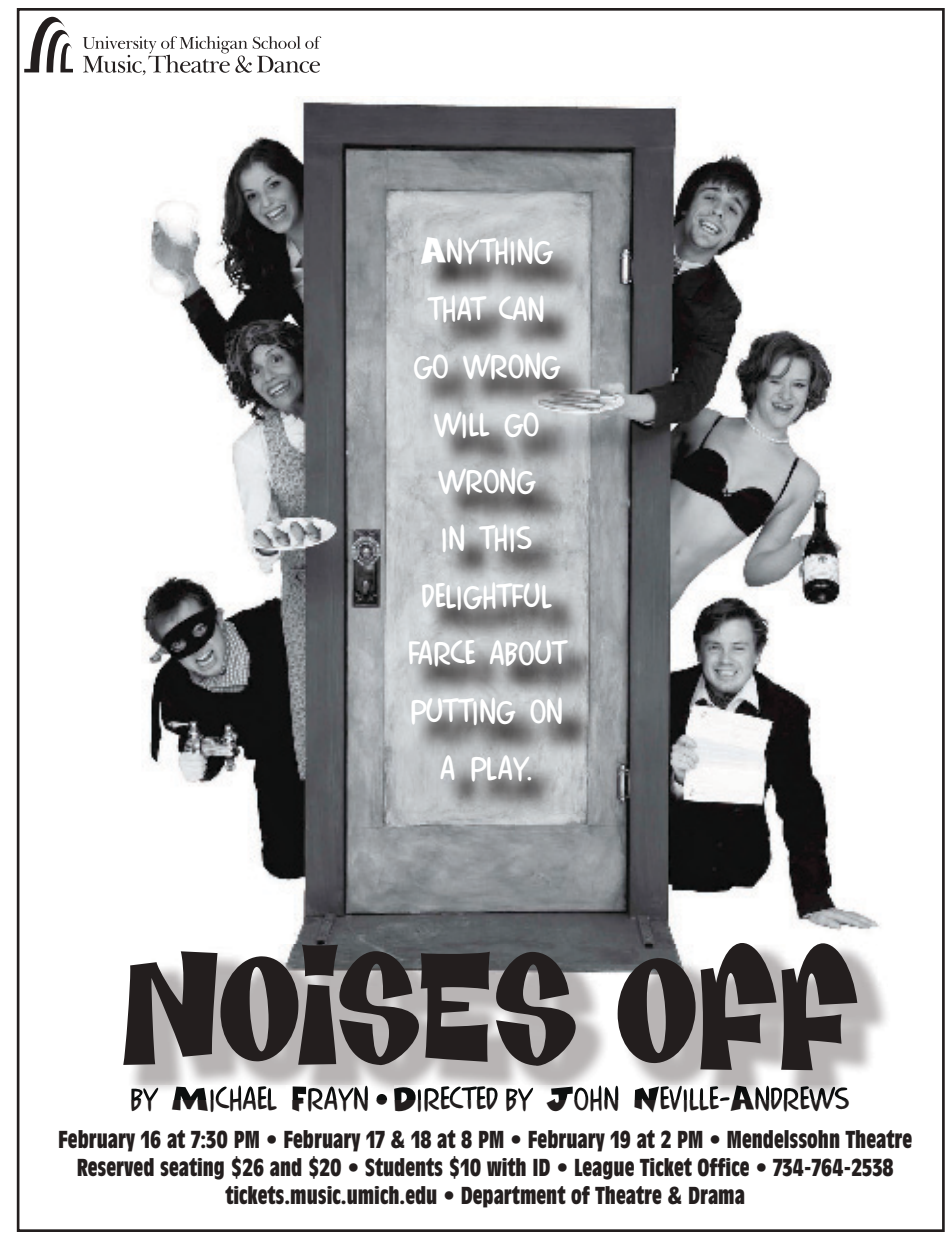
"We are confident that these five programs will comprise a meaningful addition to the quality and scope of Jewish life in Ann Arbor," says Goldman, "while addressing significant needs and expanding participation in community life. We are also pleased that many other worthwhile ideas, while not receiving funding through the Impact Fund, received broad exposure in the community. Perhaps we can raise added funds in this year's campaign to fund more great ideas next year."

To learn more, visit the Federation's website at www.jewishannarbor.org or contact the Federation at 677-0100. ■

## *Roger Cohen talk now February 6*

The talk by *New York Times* correspondent Roger Cohen—"Israeli Spring? The Enduring Jewish Question"—originally planned for Sunday, February 5 ahs been rescheduled for Monday, February 6, at 6 p.m. in the Rogel Ballroom of the Michigan Union (530 South Street). The talk is free and open to the public. No reservations are necessary.



133rd season **ums 11/12**

# february

## Sabine Meyer and the Trio di Clarone
Saturday \ February 4 \ 8 pm
Rackham Auditorium

PROGRAM

| | |
|---|---|
| Poulenc | Sonata for Two Clarinets (1918) |
| Mozart | Three Arias from *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) |
| Stravinsky | Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo (1918) |
| J.S. Bach | French Suite No. 5 for Two Clarinets and Basset Horn (1723) |
| Mozart | Divertimento No. 1 for Three Basset Horns, K. 439b (1783) |
| C.P.E. Bach | Duo for Two Clarinets in C Major, Wq. 142 (b.1714) |
| Mozart | Four Arias from *Cosi fan tutte* for Three Basset Horns (1789) |

Media Partner **WGTE 91.3 FM.**

## Shanghai Chinese Orchestra Chamber Ensemble
**Wang Fujian** artistic director
Friday \ February 10 \ 8 pm
Rackham Auditorium

The Shanghai Chinese Orchestra Chamber Ensemble performs music that represents the gallant warriors of the past, the happy days of childhood, a foggy spring morning after a night of rain, and other poetic images brought to life by these iconic musicians. They perform on the *zheng, dizi, erhu, pipa*, and other Chinese instruments seldom featured in the West.

Sponsored by the **Confucius Institute of the University of Michigan.**
Special support for this residency is from **Arts Midwest's Performing Arts Fund**.
Media Partner **WGTE 91.3 FM.**

## The Tallis Scholars
**Peter Phillips** director
Thursday \ February 16 \ 7:30 pm
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

The Tallis Scholars add a new dimension to UMS's 11/12 focus on artistic renegades, presenting music of the wealthy Italian prince Carlo Gesualdo (b.1566). At the centerpiece of this program is the *Tenebrae Responses for Holy Saturday*, part of the liturgy for the final three days of Holy Week. Works by other "maverick" Renaissance composers round out the program. Complete program listing available at www.ums.org.

Sponsored by **Glenn Watkins.**
Funded in part by an award from the **National Endowment for the Arts.** Art Works.
Media Partners **WRCJ 90.9 FM** and **WDET 101.9 FM.**

## Sweet Honey In The Rock
Friday \ February 17 \ 8 pm
Hill Auditorium

Sweet Honey In The Rock focuses on music that challenges, inspires, teaches, encourages, and empowers audiences from all walks of life to become interested and involved in issues that are central to their lives. The group has built a distinguished legacy as one of the most celebrated ambassadors of *a cappella* music, fusing five scintillating and soulful voices with the texture, harmonic blend, and raw quality that is indigenous and true to authentic *a cappella* music. Sign language interpreted.

Sponsored by University of Michigan Health System

Media Partners **Metro Times, Between the Lines,** and **WEMU 89.1 FM.**

## Wayne McGregor | Random Dance
Saturday \ February 18 \ 8 pm
Power Center

Wayne McGregor | Random Dance was founded in 1992 and became the instrument upon which McGregor evolved his drastically fast and articulate choreographic style. The company became a byword for its radical approach to new technology, incorporating animation, digital film, 3-D architecture, electronic sound, and virtual dancers into the live choreography. Wayne McGregor is "doing some of the most exciting work in ballet on the planet." (*The New York Times*)

Funded in part by an award from the **National Endowment for the Arts.** Art Works.
Media Partners **Metro Times, Between the Lines,** and **WDET 101.9 FM.**

High-Definition Broadcast from the National Theatre, London
***Traveling Light***
By **Nicholas Wright**
Directed by **Nicholas Hytner**
Sunday \ February 19 \ 7 pm
Michigan Theater

Nicholas Wright's new play is a funny and fascinating tribute to the Eastern European immigrants who became major players in Hollywood's Golden Age.

Music of Marsalis' 50th Birthday
## Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis
Wednesday \ February 22 \ 7:30 pm
Hill Auditorium

On this new tour and to celebrate Wynton Marsalis' 50th birthday, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO) will showcase a retrospective of Wynton's music written for big band. The JLCO will complement the program with modern jazz renditions of traditional favorites, including tunes by Thelonious Monk; classic Blue Note Records selections by Herbie Hancock, Jackie McLean, Lee Morgan, and Joe Henderson; and modern compositions and arrangements by jazz contemporaries.

Media Partners **WEMU 89.1 FM, Metro Times, The Michigan Chronicle, Detroit Jewish News,** and **Ann Arbor's 107one.**

## Hagen Quartet
Thursday \ February 23 \ 7:30 pm
Rackham Auditorium

"Their performance was filled with subtlety and wonder... the playing was breathtaking in its precision, dynamism, and agility...a thrilling encounter." (*The Independent*) For this return performance, the Hagen Quartet presents a program of Beethoven quartets as part of UMS's focus on musical renegades.

PROGRAM

| | |
|---|---|
| Beethoven | String Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1 (1801) |
| Beethoven | String Quartet in f minor, Op. 95 (1810) |
| Beethoven | String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 74 (1809) |

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# Dash Moore receives prestigious national book award

*Kimberly Kunoff, special to the* WJN

University of Michigan Professor of History Deborah Dash Moore has been named recipient of the National Jewish Book Award for *Gender & Jewish History* (Indiana University Press, 2011) in the category of Anthologies and Collections.

The Jewish Book Council made the announcement in January. Other recipients include Pulitzer Prize- winning author Art Spiegelman for *Metamaus* and Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld, whose *Until the Dawn's Light* gains him a third National Jewish Book Award.

Deborah Dash Moore

*Gender & Jewish History*, co-edited by Marion Kaplan and written in honor of Paula Hyman, a founder of Jewish gender studies, is a collection of essays from such noted scholars of Jewish History as Beth Wenger, Deborah Lipstadt, Rebecca Korbrin, and Marsha Rozenblit.

"Indiana University Press congratulates editors Deborah Dash Moore and Marion Kaplan and the extraordinary group of contributors to *Gender and Jewish History*, whose outstanding scholarship, inspired in different ways by the work of Paula Hyman, brought this amazing volume to life under Deborah's and Marion's able guidance," attests Indiana University Press Director Janet Rabinowitch.

"We at IU Press are thrilled that this excellent book, an enduring tribute to Paula's memory, has been recognized by a National Jewish Book Award. We are honored to be its publisher."

"The book and the award are a tribute to Paula Hyman—the field that she inspired and the students she mentored," acknowledged Deborah Dash Moore, director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History.

The winners of the 2011 National Jewish Book Awards will be honored on March 14 at a gala awards ceremony to be held at the Center for Jewish History in Manhattan. The awards ceremony, which begins at 8 p.m., is free and open to the public.

As the longest-running North American awards program of its kind in the field of Jewish literature, the National Jewish Book Awards is designed to recognize outstanding books of Jewish interest. In addition to the above-mentioned winners, awards are given out this year in 14 categories.

A complete list of the 2011 National Jewish Book Award winners and finalists is available at the Jewish Book Council's website. ■

**At University of Michigan Hillel's Chanukah party held December 21, 2011, the Ann Arbor Jewish community celebrated with Tilly Shames, Hillel's new executive director, and Michael Brooks, now Hillel's director of Institutional Advancement.**


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# American politics and the health of the environment

*Jonathan Cohn, special to the* WJN

Judaism is my faith but it is not, strictly speaking, my specialty. So when I was asked, recently, to share my thoughts on Jewish thinking and the health of the planet, I decided I should start by consulting the most sacred text of all: Google. I typed in "Jewish," "health," and "world." That yielded entries like The Lowfat Jewish Vegetarian Cookbook, Is it immoral to be overweight?, and Healthy Broccoli knishes. From this, I concluded that food is even more central to Jewish identity than I realized—helpful insights, perhaps, but not really relevant to issues of planetary survival.

**Jonathan Cohn**

So I turned next to Aura Ahuvia, rabbinic intern with the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah. She suggested I consider modern interpretations of the Eden story, where people are instructed to "care for all life" rather than simply dominate over nature. This was more helpful. She mentioned a passage that sets the rules for wartime, advising soldiers not to uproot olive trees as they fight—a signal, in other words, to show respect for nonhuman, but still living, creatures. She also told me about the concept of "interbreathing," the idea that we, quite literally, breathe in what the trees breathe out, and vice versa. And that, by extension, our souls are part of a much broader ecosystem, to which we are all connected and for which we were all responsible.

That resonated with me—a lot. As a few of you may know, I've spent much of the past decade learning, writing, and speaking about health care reform in our country. While the debate over reform is often about simple, concrete measures of well-being—How expensive are your premiums? Which doctor can you see? At its core, the debate has always been about responsibility, whether it should be individual or collective.

Up until the 1930s, medical care and health was thought to be purely an individual responsibility. People paid for themselves. Those who could not were at the mercy of charity.

But a revolution in medical care—the one that brought us anesthesia, the sanitary technique, and other innovations—also made it too expensive for one person to afford; so, interest in distributing the burden across the population began to grow.

The idea behind this is simple. We are all susceptible to illness and accident. We could all be crippled financially, as well as physically, if left to our own devices and resources. But if we take responsibility for one another—if we all do our part, if we all contribute—then we can all be protected. We can all be secure.

The recent Affordable Care Act sought to put the principle of shared responsibility further into practice. But the debate is not over. Many want to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace Medicare, our existing program for people over 65, with a voucher-like program. For better or for worse—I would argue for worse—these efforts represent an attempt to move away from shared, collective responsibility and back to a more individualistic notion of society.

As it happens, we're having the same debate about the environment. For most of human history, the planet's well-being was an afterthought. The world was ours to use as we please, to make use of, to exploit for our own development. Like that older interpretations of Eden, we were the masters and the world was our servant. But in just the last few decades, we've become aware of our mutual dependence on the planet, whether for nourishment, shelter, or life sustaining air.

Once again, we are presented with what the social scientists call a collective action problem. When our water is fouled, our air is dirty, and our planet is heating, we all suffer. But we can fix it only through collective action, by seeing ourselves as partners, with each other and, yes, with all of the other living things on earth.

Each of us can, and should, do our part. We can recycle, purchase environmentally favorable foods, and reduce our carbon footprints. But as I think through this political debate, and the one about health care, I also think there's another way we need to remember that we are part of a greater world. And by that, I mean the greater political world.

These days you hear a lot of disappointment and frustration with politics. And here in this community, those sentiments are frequently the byproduct of high expectations after the election of 2008. The achievements since that election have seemed insufficient and flawed—an economic recovery package that didn't produce a growing economy, a universal health care law that isn't fully universal, a financial regulation initiative that won't do very much regulating, just to name a few.

Meanwhile, the current political environment seems absolutely toxic, with misinformation routinely ruling the day—and our lawmakers unable to handle even routine matters of government business. There is a poison in the air today, contaminating our discourse just as surely as it is contaminating our lungs.

Rabbi Modechai Kaplan, the founder or Reconstructionist Judiaism once said that religion is as much a progressive unlearning of false ideas concerning God as it is the learning of the true ideas concerning God. In politics today, there's a lot of unlearning to do.

It's easy to blame our elected leaders for these failings, and to some extent, that's fair. But politics, like policy, is also a matter of collective responsibility. I've heard so many people complain about the state of politics, many of these people are part of our Jewish community. What I don't hear is people doing something about it.

And so I put the question to you directly: Are you taking action? Have you written your representatives in Congress? Have you organized a rally? Have you bothered to learn about the issues, so that you can be a source of information, and guidance, for people who aren't?

That last part is particularly important. For all of the money spent on political advertising, for all of the calculation that goes into political strategy, actually getting people to change their minds is incredibly difficult. But when somebody hears a new argument from somebody they know and they trust—a friend, a family member, a neighbor—they really do start to think.

A lot of people in our community already do these things, I know. But many haven't. And many that do are so dispirited they are ready to give up. I hope that changes. What's happening at the grassroots, at the neighborhood level, is as much a part of our political failure as anything that's happening in Washington, on either end of Pennsylvania Avenue. We need better leaders, sure. But we need better followers too.

It's easy to forget sometimes, given the din of daily life, but we are all very lucky. We live in the greatest country in the world. Not a perfect country, by any means, but one that laid out the basic ideals of liberty and democracy, then spent the next 250 years trying, fitfully and slowly, to realize them. And we have the tools to keep improving. In the grand view of political development, this is paradise. This is Eden.

But this paradise requires us to maintain it—to nourish it. If we don't, it will be gone forever.■

*Jonathan Cohn is a senior editor at* The New Republic *magazine.* T *is article is based on comments he shared at the 2011 Rosh Hashanah services of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah.*

## JCC hosts gardening club

*Karen Freedland, special to the* WJN

Calling all green thumbs! The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor will host a new gardening club that will include monthly speakers, workshops, plant exchanges and garden tours. The first meeting will take place Monday, February 27, at 7 p.m. and will feature Kathy Squiers, head horticulturalist for Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation. Squiers will present a talk on garden maintenance, landscape design and preparing for spring. Additional meetings will take place on Tuesday, March 27, and Monday, April 23, at 7 p.m.

Upcoming classes will feature biodynamic gardening practices, tours and vegetable garden cultivation. Annual dues are $20 for JCC members and $30 for non-members.

For more information or to register, contact Karen Freedland at karenfreedland@jccfed.org or 971-0990.

**JFS brought the Temple Beth Emeth Choir to a Chanukah celebration at the University Living assisted living facility. JFS' Elderlink program works with the facility year-round by providing Jewish training, education and programming for the staff to meet the needs of Jewish residents and ensure a higher level of Jewish cultural, religious and social life.**

## Celebrity Cooking Classes begin this month

*Karen Freedland, special to the* WJN

Reality television is coming to the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor with a brand new program, Celebrity Cooking Classes. If you are a fan of *The Barefoot Contessa, Top Chef, Chop* and other cooking shows, this cooking program will be right up your alley. Once a month, the JCC will host a local prominent Jewish chef/cook to teach a class in preparing a special dish or two. Tuesday, February 21, at 7 p.m., will feature Lori Shepard, owner and chef of Simply Scrumptious Catering. Shepard will lead the class in how to prepare a romantic dinner for two. Wine is included with the class.

**Lori Shephard**

Shepard's love for cooking and entertaining started at the age of five at the knees of her mother and grandmother. After many years of feeding her creativity by providing informal catering, Shepard made the decision to follow her heart and opened Simply Scrumptious in 2003.

Additional classes will take place Thursday, March 22 and Tuesday, April 24, both featuring chef Dena Jaffe, culinary coordinator of Whole Heart Group and former chef to Dr. Andrew Weil, author and health educator.

The cost is $25 per class for JCC members and $35 for non–members. Advanced registration is required as space is limited. For more information or to RSVP, contact Karen Freedland at karenfreedand@jccfed.org or call 971-0990.

## Adler Memorial Fund helps make Hebrew study available

*David Shtulman, special to the* WJN

When Vera Adler passed away in 2008, her daughter, Dorit Adler and granddaughter, Michelle Silver thought about ways to honor her memory. Their answer was to create a permanent legacy for her in Ann Arbor.

Vera had a special gift for languages and was fluent in Czech, German, Serbian, Hungarian, Hebrew, Italian, French and English. Therefore, when Dorit and Michelle thought about how to honor Vera's memory, the Keshet Hebrew language program, sponsored by the Jewish Federation to make Hebrew language instruction available to all Ann Arbor teens seemed ideal.

The Vera Adler Memorial Endowment Fund for the Keshet Ann Arbor Hebrew Program, established in the Jewish Community Foundation, provides annual distributions to the Keshet program in perpetuity. The resources made available to Keshet each year help to sustain the program and to reduce the need for additional support. This fund honors not only Vera Adler's name but also her love of languages and belief in the importance of Jewish children learning Hebrew. Dorit and Michelle are sure that she would be proud of this legacy.

A donor does not have to be wealthy to create a legacy in support of someone or something they love. It only takes a modest initial investment of $5,000 to create a permanent endowment fund in the Jewish Community Foundation. The donor can then choose to add to the fund each year to increase the amount it generates for the chosen purpose. In addition, friends and family members can pay tribute to the person named by the fund by making their own contributions to it.

Contributions to the Vera Adler Memorial Endowment Fund are welcome and can be made through the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor at 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 48108 or by calling the Federation at 677-0100.

The Jewish Community Foundation welcomes inquiries about how it can serve as a vehicle for your philanthropic, planned giving or estate planning needs. For more information, contact David Shtulman at 677-0100 or by email to david@jewishannarbor.org.

## Ann Arbor Birthright Israel Foundation presentation

*Fran Martin, special to the* WJN

Birthright Israel offers the gift of a free, first time, 10-day trip to Israel, for all Jewish young adults between the ages of 18 and 26, regardless of their financial situation or religious background. The program format is accessible to Jews of varying backgrounds and traditions, whether secular, children of intermarriage, Orthodox, Conservative or Reform. It comes with no strings attached.

The trip has three objectives:

- To strengthen each participant's identity as a Jew.
- To build an understanding, a friendship and a lasting bond with the land and people of Israel.
- To reinforce the solidarity of the Jewish people worldwide.

On March 11, the community is invited to a local presentation on behalf of Birthright Israel Foundation at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor. It will be held from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. *Soul Tripping*, a film about the Birthright experience, will be shown. Birthright alumni will be on hand to talk about how this experience affected their lives.

Admission is free and refreshments will be served. Because there are more applicants than spaces available on Birthright, there will be a fundraising component to the event; every time applicants are turned away for lack of funds, there is a risk of not attracting them back to the program. All funds raised in Ann Arbor will benefit local applicants.

For further information and to RSVP, contact Fran Martin at maizenblue@comcast.net or 665-1452.

## New play reading workshop at the JCC

*Karen Freedland, special to the* WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor will feature a new four-week Jewish play reading workshop led by Kate Mendeloff, professor in the University of Michigan Residential College drama department and director of the annual outdoor Shakespeare in the Arb.

**Kate Mendeloff**

From Shalom Aleichem to Neil Simon, the group will explore the world of great Jewish plays, written by Jewish authors. This is a chance to act and learn with an experienced professional. The program may evolve into a Jewish Theatre Workshop with regular performances.

The class will meet for four Sundays in a row from 7–9 p.m. on February 19, February 26, March 4, and March 11. The cost for the program is $70 for JCC members and $85 for non-members.

For additional information or to register for the class, contact Karen Freedland at karenfreedland@jccfed.org or call 971-0990.

## Attention movie lovers, film buffs and cinephiles

*Karen Freedland, special to the* WJN

For the past 10 years, the Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival has been one of the most anticipated events of the year. The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor is in the beginning stages of planning the 2012 Festival, which will take place April 29–May 3 at the Michigan Theater. The steering committee is under way and the JCC is looking for movie lovers to help in the film selection process and planning of the festival. The Film Festival committee is looking for members and volunteers. Come screen movies to be shown, help plan lectures and meet other film buffs. The first meeting will be early February.

To join the Jewish Film Festival committee or for more information, contact Karen Freedland at karenfreeland@jccfed.org or 971-0990.

## JCC gym floor renovation complete

*Andrea Rosner-Najer, special to the* WJN

After much research, exploration and gathering of suggestions, information and insights, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor has completed the renovation of their gym floor. The gym concrete was tested, treated, sealed and tested again. After many discussions with experts in the field and those who have utilized various types of gym floors, the JCC replaced the parquet wood floor with a new solid wood floor installed via tongue and groove method with several methods of moisture barriers in place underneath. This raised the floor slightly from the entrance to the gym, which necessitated a modification to the hallway outside of the gym. Ken Emerson, JCC maintenance supervisor, was instrumental in the design and laying of the tiles outside the gym and in the JCC's back hallway.

**Before and after shots of the gym floor**

The board and staff of the JCC appreciate the community's patience during this long process. Now that the renovation of the gym is complete, volleyball and basketball will resume, and Israeli Dancing will move back into the gym.

The JCC welcomes the community to stop by and take a look at the new enhancements. With the new gym floor and the completion of the lounge renovations that were complete last year, the facility can now be rented for parties, baby/wedding showers, bris or baby namings, weddings or mitzvot. For more information on having an event at the JCC, contact Rebekah Gamble at rebekahgamble@jccfed.org or 971-0990.

## Falafel and a movie set for February 18th

*Karen Freedland, special to the* WJN

How do you spend your Saturday evenings? The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor will host "Falafel and a Movie" on Saturday, February 18 at 6:30 p.m. Join this monthly screening at the JCC of an Israeli film, followed by a meal of falafel and Israeli salads. The February selection is the award winning film, *T'chiyeh v'T'hiyeh* (*Live and Become*).

The film tells the story of Shlomo, an Ethiopian boy who is placed by his Christian mother with an Ethiopian Jewish woman whose child has died. This woman, who will become his adoptive mother, is about to be airlifted from a Sudanese refugee camp to Israel during Operation Moses in 1984. His birth mother, who hopes for a better life for him, tells him "Go, live, and become," as he leaves her to board the plane. The film tells of his growing up in Israel and how he deals with the secrets he carries: not being Jewish and having left his birth mother. *T'chiyeh v'T'hiyeh* was directed by Romanian-born Radu Mih ileanu.

The film won Most Popular International Film at the 2005 Vancouver International Film Festival.

Tickets are $10 for JCC members and $12 for non-members. Reservations are required. Childcare is available for an additional $5 per child with advanced notice. To reserve a space, contact Karen Freedland at karenfreedland@jccfed.org or 971-0990.

## JFS takes over Meals on Wheels Christmas day

*Alice Miller, special to* WJN

Ten years ago, Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels approached Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County about taking over the meal delivery to their homebound clients on Christmas day. The request, in line with the agency's mission, and on a day when most JFS employees and volunteers were free, was a perfect fit. And it has been every Christmas since.

Lisa Franklin, the current director of Programs and Community Outreach at JFS, lead the agency's participation in 2011 delivering meals around the Ann Arbor community on December 25. More than 40 JFS volunteers delivered two meals to 134 people on 18 different routes.

Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels delivers food six days a week to homebound clients around the community who are not able to shop or cook for themselves.

As Christmas fell on a Sunday this year, a day clients typically do not receive meals, they were particularly surprised to see JFS volunteers on their doorsteps.

"I think people were appreciative to receive a meal, but were also excited to have contact on a day they normally may not," Franklin said.

The Meals on Wheels staff and clients were especially thankful this year as it was the first Sunday in the past nine years that they were able to deliver on a Sunday.

While clients were appreciative, the volunteers with JFS also enjoyed the experience.

"My favorite part was seeing all the families who participated," Franklin said. "A few of the families have been delivering together this day for years and have made it an integral part of their family tradition; one which they look forward to every year."

For more information on volunteering with JFS, contact Lisa Franklin at lfranklin@jfsannarbor.org or call 769-0209.

# SPICE* of Life

***Social, Physical, Intellectual, Cultural, and Educational Programs for Adults**

*Merrill Poliner, special to the* WJN

### *Tuesdays*

**10 a.m.: Washtenaw Community College Bible Literature and History Class taught by Dr. Lizbeth Fried.** This semester's class, beginning on February 7, will cover "Ezra in History and Tradition: Inquiry into God's Justice." Call 971-0990 to register.

**11 a.m.: Energy Exercise© with Maria Farquhar.** $4 per session, or 3 sessions for $10

**Noon: Homemade Dairy Lunch Buffet.** $3 per person.

**1 p.m.: Games and Activities.** Join in for a variety of games and activities including mahjong, quilting for the patients of Mott Hospital, art projects, and other card games.

**1 p.m.: Wii sports** including bowling, tennis, golf and baseball. No sports or computer experience necessary.

**1 p.m.: Open Computer time**—tutor available. Call for reservations and more information.

### *Thursdays*

**10 a.m.: Energy Exercise© with Maria Farquhar.** $4 per session, or 3 sessions for $10

**11 a.m.: Current Events with Heather Dombey.** A discussion of this week's news. Bring items of interest for group discussion.

**Noon: Homemade Dairy Lunch Buffet.** $3 per person.

**1 p.m.: Thursday Special Events and Presentations** (see below for details).

**2:15 p.m.: Sidney Warschausky Literary Group** facilitated by group members. Call Merrill Poliner, 971-0990, for more information and the title of the current book.

### *Fridays*

**1:30 p.m.: Yiddish Reading Group** at the Jewish Community Center. Call Ray Juni for additional information at 761-2765.

### *Special events and presentations*

**Thursday, February 2**

**12:30 p.m.: Birthday celebration** for all with February birthdays! Bring family and friends for lunch and birthday cake.

**1 p.m.:** For more than thirty years, Jim Glenn has made presentations about William Shakespeare to a wide range of audiences. His lively and informative talks set the Bard against a rich description of Elizabethan times—surprising and delighting audiences with intriguing details of the author's life and work. The presentation covers Shakespeare as a living, breathing—and extremely busy—author and playwright during one of the most dynamic and pivotal periods of theatre history.

**Thursday, February 9**

**12:30 p.m.: A registered nurse from Care Response** will take and record blood pressures and address any questions.

**1 p.m.: Rabbi Lisa Delson of Temple Beth Emeth** comes to SPICE to celebrate Tu B'shevat, the New Year of the Trees.

**Thursday, February 16**

**1 p.m.: Caroline Helton, opera singer** and professor of voice at the University of Michigan School of Music, will perform songs ranging from opera to jazz to Broadway standards.

**Thursday, February 23**

**1 p.m: Joyce Kessler, Injury Prevention Coordinator** at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital will conduct the second of a series of four Senior Lifestyle and Injury Prevention sessions. This month's session, which will concentrate on Fall Prevention, is of importance to anyone who wants to decrease the likelihood of serious injury for themselves or their loved ones.

# "Ladies of the Book" Club for women ages 20–39

*Karen Freedland, special to the* WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor will host a book club for women ages 20–39. This new club will meet the second Monday of the month at 8 p.m. at the JCC. The book chosen for February 13 is *Jerusalem Maiden* by Talia Carner.

*Jerusalem Maiden* takes place in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. A young Orthodox Jewish woman in the holy city of Jerusalem is expected to marry and produce many sons to help hasten the Messiah's arrival. While the feisty Esther Kaminsky understands her obligations, her artistic talent inspires her to secretly explore worlds outside her religion, to dream of studying in Paris—and to believe that God has a special destiny for her. When tragedy strikes her family, Esther views it as a warning from an angry God and suppresses her desires in order to become an obedient "Jerusalem maiden." But when a surprising opportunity forces itself on to her preordained path, Esther finds her beliefs clashing dangerously with the passions she has staved off her entire life—forcing her to confront the most difficult and damning question of all: To whom must she be true, God or herself?

The March 12 meeting will feature *With Friends Like These* by Sally Koslow; April 9 will feature *Big Girl Small* by Rachel Dewoskin; and May 14 will feature *Following Polly* by Karen Bergreen.

For further information or to register for this free program, contact Rebekah Gamble at rebekahgamble@jccfed.org or 971-0990.

# "Health Starts Here" is topic of Jewish Women's Circle meeting in February

*Mae Sander, special to the* WJN

The February 6 meeting of the Jewish Women's Circle of Washtenaw County will feature a cooking demonstration at Whole Foods Market by Jan Kemp, M.Sc. and Healthy Eating Specialist. Using only plant-based food, and following the "Health Starts Here" program, she will prepare and discuss several recipes and techniques for using healthful ingredients. Attendees will have the opportunity to try ample samples of the foods that are prepared, and will receive copies of the recipes used.

**Jan Kemp M. Sc., at the Whole Foods Market**

The meeting is just in time for Tu B'Shevat, the 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar, celebrated this year on Wednesday, February 8. This is the day that marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees." One part of the celebration is eating fruit: particularly grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. Many recipes presented at the meeting are appropriate for this celebration, as well as the use of renewable paper products that save trees.

Esther Goldstein, Jewish Women's Circle organizer, is working with Kemp to plan and select the foods to be prepared during the demonstration, and will also provide additional material about the foods selected and about the Tu B'Shevat holiday.

"All the recipes in the cooking demonstration will be plant-based only, without meat, eggs, or dairy products, refined sugar, or processed oils," Kemp explains. "For example, I may present techniques for making fat-free caramelized onions, or I may roast mushrooms in balsamic vinegar rather than using oil. I'll point to many ways to add flavor without excess fat."

During the evening, Kemp will prepare three or four recipes that follow the "four pillars" of healthy eating developed by the "Health Starts Here" program. These include eating whole, unprocessed foods, eating a colorful variety of plants, eating healthy fats, and selecting nutrient-dense foods. These principles do not prohibit eating animal protein in moderation, though none will be used in the demonstration. Kemp's discussion will include suggestions of appropriate ingredient combinations and serving sizes.

About these food choices, Kemp says: "Delicious desserts can rely on fruit or even vegetable purees without added sweetners. Dates or sweet potatoes are especially good for adding natural sweetness in combination with chocolate and other flavors."

Kemp will start with an avocado-grapefruit appetizer, and continue with a main dish based on rice, lentils, quinoa, or pasta. Dessert possibilities include a raw fudge based on walnuts and dates, or a lemon-flavored confection. Ingredients and techniques not used in the actual cooking will also be discussed, and Kemp will be glad to answer questions about new or unfamiliar items.

The Whole Foods website includes all recipes to be used, and many more. Kemp will point out how to find additional new ideas on the website, noting: "Some of my favorite recipes that appear on the website, besides those to be presented, are pecan cookies and a pasta with Romesco sauce."

Kemp, a Certified Nutrition Specialist, has over 25 years of experience teaching health and fitness in the Ann Arbor community, including working as an instructor for the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and at Whole Foods. "Health Starts Here" is a nation-wide Whole Foods program, which includes cooking advice, classes, and recipes for an approach to healthier eating.

The Jewish Women's Circle (JWC) meeting will begin at 7 p.m. (note earlier-than-usual time) upstairs in the classroom at Whole Foods Market, 3135 Washtenaw Avenue. Cost for this JWC-Whole Foods program is $10 per person. All JWC meetings are open to all women; no affiliation necessary. To learn more, contact Esther at Goldsteinesther@jewmich.com. ■

DAVID KERSCH
734 214.3796

STEPHEN ANDERSON
734 214.5897

BETSY CAVANAUGH
734 214.3740

CHARLIE CHAPELL
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# This month's programs at Beth Israel Congregation

*Elliot Sorkin, special to the* WJN

### *Hannan Lis to discuss reforestation in Israel*

**Sunday February 12, 5:30 p.m. (following the Sunday minyan at 5 p.m.)**

In honor of Tu B'shvat (February 8), Hannan Lis, Midwest president and assistant vice-president of marketing on the national board of directors of the Jewish National Fund will speak about "Reforestation in Israel." He will also include an update on the devastating forest fire on Mount Carmel that killed 44 people, and destroyed hundreds of acres of forest and property. For information, contact Harvey Somers at harveysomers@gmail.com. This program is sponsored by Men's Club.

**Hannan Lis**

Originally from Haifa, Hannan Lis is principal, COO and board member of The WW Group, Inc. (Weight Watchers' largest franchise group), and founder and CEO of Lis Ventures LLC, a venture fund investing in emerging technologies and companies. He is also past-president of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Detroit and a member of the Detroit Federation board of governors. Lis is a current member of the American Jewish Committee board of governors and co-president of MOPAC, a Democratic political action committee.

### *Men's Club Super Bowl Party*

**Sunday, February 5, 6 p.m.**

Participants will enjoy a wide screen experience in Beth Israel's Social Hall, along with a full spread of hot dogs/buns (both meat and veggie varieties), vegetables, a range of chips/salsa, nosherei, and beverages. The event is $12 per person to cover the cost of food. Everyone ages 13 and up is welcome. To RSVP, email Shelley Aronson at robin@firstriver.com.

### *World Wide Wrap*

**Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.**

Sponsored locally by the Beth Israel Men's, "World Wide Wrap" is a project of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs. This event encourages Jews around the world to put on tefillin and pray together. Beth Israel will provide extra sets of tefillin and experienced teachers will be available to assist everyone who would like to participate in this important mitzvah.

Beth Israel is known for its post service Polar Bear Tefillin Photo that captures all the tefillin clad participants in the out-of-doors, regardless of the weather.

Following the Shaharit service and photo, participants will enjoy a brunch of bagels, lox, and coffee. Some of Beth Israel's religious school students will participate in the morning program as well.

### *Lunch and Learn/Lunch and Laugh*

**Wednesday, February 1, 8, 15, 22/ February 29, noon–1:15 p.m.**

These weekly events take place at the Garfunkel-Schteingart Activity Center at 2010 Washtenaw Avenue, led by Rabbi Kim Blumenthal and Rabbi Robert Dobrusin. On February 1, the group will study the traditional and modern sources about the origins of Tu B'shvat and the Jewish imperative to act consciously and respectively toward the natural environment. On February 8, the group will participate in a Tu B'shvat seder complete with traditional fruits. On February 15 and February 22, there will be a discussion on current events taking place in the community and in Israel. On February 29, as part of Lunch and Laugh honoring the month of Adar, the group will listen to comedy, watch video presentations, and tell stories to celebrate the season of laughter.

Participants are asked to bring a dairy lunch; beverages and desserts will be provided at no charge.

### *Mini Minyan*

**Saturday, February 10**

Mini Minyan is Beth Israel's Shabbat morning service on the second Saturday each month for all kids in kindergarten through 2nd grade. Mini Minyan was designed in collaboration with many of the parents from Beth Israel and serves as a bridge for kids between Tot Shabbat and Kehillat Shabbat. It shares many of the favorite songs and stories from Tot Shabbat while beginning to teach prayers and incorporate activities similar to Kehillat Shabbat. The Mini Minyan service is led by program director Jacob Kander with special games and activities led by a team of parent volunteers. All parents are welcome to join in this service along with their children. Mini Minyan meets at Beth Israel on the second Saturday of the month downstairs in room 16.

### *Kehillat Shabbat*

**Saturday, February 10**

Kehillat Shabbat is Beth Israel's Shabbat morning service for kids in 3rd-5th grade. The program is designed for kids to have a great Shabbat experience, including a kid friendly service along with games and other activities each month to help teach about holidays and Jewish values while building a stronger community for the kids in a fun way. Gabe Pachter facilitates a service that is filled with student participation in the prayers, interactive discussions, and always ends with a snack. Kehillat Shabbat is a great time once a month for elementary school students to celebrate Shabbat, to schmooze, and to learn together. Kehillat Shabbat meets at Beth Israel on the second Saturday of the month downstairs in room 12.

### *Thirsty Third Thursdays*

**February 16, after 7:30 p.m. minyan**

Men's Club offers this once monthly event after the evening service, to enjoy coffee and snacks at a local establishment, while discussing the weekly parasha (Torah portion) or other topics of Jewish interest. For more information, or to suggest topics of interest, contact Shelley Aronson at robin@firstriver.com. No reservations are required.

### *LaBriut: Judaism and Health Series, "Not all Pandemics are Created Equal"*

**Friday, February 17. Friday Night Service, 7:30 p.m.; presentation by Dr. Arnold Monto, 8:15 p.m.**

The most recent pandemic was different from previous ones. While there were not as many deaths, there was high illness frequency in school age children and some severe illness in health adults. What makes pandemics so different? How can the flu virus kill 50 million worldwide in 1918 and so few now? And what is going on with bird flu?

The presentation will be given by Dr. Arnold Monto, professor of epidemiology at University of Michigan, and the Thomas Francis, Jr. Collegiate Professor of Public Health. Dr. Monto's primary current concerns include occurrence, etiology and prevention of infectious diseases in industrialized and developing countries; frequency and cause of respiratory infections in families living in the community, and in factors that predict the occurrence and prevention of these illnesses; research and training to respond to bioterrorist threats. This is one in a series of presentations on Friday evenings and Saturdays on the topic of Judaism and health.

**Dr. Arnold Monto**

### *Friday Night Lights*

**Friday, March 2, Family Friendly Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 6 p.m.; Friday Night Lights Dinner, 7 p.m.**

Beth Israel offers a family friendly Shabbat dairy dinner for $7 per person, with no charge for children 3 and under. Families and individuals are encouraged to attend the full evening, which includes a service and all the traditional rituals of the Friday night meal. Because no payments can be accepted on Shabbat, there must be a pre-payment which will confirm the family's or individual's reservation.

### *A Taste of Mussar*

What is Mussar? How does it work? What's in it for me? These are questions that are frequently asked about this ancient spiritual tradition that has recently become very popular in the Jewish world.

Beginning March 4, a one-month mini-course, Taste of Mussar, will be offered. The course, developed by Dr. Alan Morinis, dean of The Mussar Institute, introduces Mussar and the process of Mussar learning and provides resources for working on sample soul traits (or *middot*), the essence of one's inner life. The month leading up to Pesach is considered by many to be an excellent time to engage in such inner work and look at ways to bring greater meaning to one's life.

All materials will be sent electronically by The Mussar Institute. While the course is intended primarily for self-study, participants will be able to experience how a Mussar group works at a one-time optional group (*va'ad*) meeting to be held Sunday, March 18, from 10–11:30 a.m. This meeting, to be facilitated by Rabbi Dobrusin and Roann Altman, will be open only to enrolled participants who have been studying the course materials.

The one-month Taste of Mussar course costs $18 per person. To enroll, send in a check made payable to Beth Israel Congregation with name, email address, and telephone number. All registrations must be received by Thursday, February 23, in order to ensure timely delivery of the materials. For questions about the course or about Mussar in general, contact Altman at roann@umich.edu or 483-8352.

### *Tot Shabbat*

**Saturdays, February 10 and February 24**

Tot Shabbat is Beth Israel's Shabbat morning program for toddlers and preschoolers along with their families. Tot Shabbat features singing, dancing, stories, and prayers to celebrate Shabbat. The leaders of Tot Shabbat are Peretz Hirsbein on the second Saturday and Jessica Kander on the fourth Saturday of the month. Peretz Hirshbein is the assistant director of the Early Childhood Center at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor and the current vice president for education on the Beth Israel board of directors. Jessica De Young Kander is a graduate of the School of Education at the University of Michigan and former preschool teacher. She currently teaches at Eastern Michigan University where she also earned her master of arts degree in Children's Literature and a master's certificate in the Teaching of Writing.

Tot Shabbat meets at Beth Israel downstairs in room 15. Following services, child size tables are set out for out Tot Shabbat kids and their families are always invited to stay to enjoy a kiddush lunch with the rest of the congregation.

### *Child/parent room*

**Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.**

Parents have the use of Room 14 every Saturday morning during services. The room is stocked with toys. The kiddush following services has kid-sized tables and chairs so that even the littlest ones may participate in the kiddush reception. ■

**World Wide Wrap participants, 2011**

# February Temple Beth Emeth events

*Brett Willner, special to the* WJN

### *Men's Torah Study*

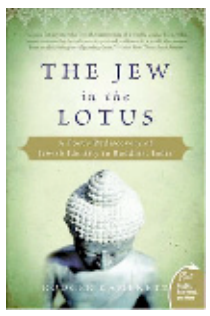
**Wednesday, February 8 and 22, 7:30 p.m.**

Temple Beth Emeth's Men's Torah study meets twice a month for an evening of learning. Refreshments served. For more information contact Roger Stutesman, rgstutesman@sbcglobal.net.

### *Spirituality Book Club*

**Thursday, February 2, noon–1:30 p.m.**
**Tuesday, February 14, 7:30–9 p.m.**

Cantor Annie's Spirituality Book Club will continue on their journey in February. This month Book Club will be reading: *The Jew in the Lotus*, by Rodger Kamenetz. Analysis of texts and group discussion will provide lively sessions each month. Participants are welcome to drop in for selected sessions or the entire series through June. Visit the TBE website, www.templebethemeth.org/content/spirituality-book-club-reading-list, for the book list for the year. Contact Cantor Rose, cantorannie@gmail.com, with questions.




### *Women's Torah Study*

**Monday, February 6, 7–8:30 p.m.**

Cantor Annie Rose leads a Women's Torah study at Temple Beth Emeth. *The Women of Reform Judaism Women's Commentary* has become a major source of insight for those studying Torah in depth or simply reading the weekly parsha, portion. This month, the Women's Torah group will be studying Yitro.

### *Rabbi Levy's Friday Lunch & Learn: gluttony and other sins*

**Friday, February 3, 10, 17, and 24, noon–1 p.m.**

Each week on Friday, Rabbi Levy will teach an informal session on Gluttony and other sins. As always bring your own lunch and join in on a lovely conversation. Come every week or when you are available. Yum!

### *Women's Tu BíShevat seder and dinner*

**Tuesday, February 7, 6:15 pm**

Come enjoy this Jewish Celebration of the Earth, featuring the Seven Species of Israel. Perform the unique rituals of the seder and taste the fruits of the earth—as well as partake in a delicious dinner. All women are invited. Cost is $18. Sponsored by Sisterhood. Email your RSVP to bobbiheilveil@gmail.com or call 994-4261.

### *Twenties and Thirties Shabbat Dinner*

**Friday, February 24, 6 p.m.**

Twenties and Thirties join TBE's TNT for a delicious Shabbat Dinner at Mani Osteria (341 East Liberty Street) Sit back and have a relaxing time at the end of the week and have Shabbat Dinner with other Twenties and Thirties. Couples and Singles are welcomed. For more information or to RSVP contact Brett Willner, bwillner@templebethemeth.org or call the Temple office 665-4744.

### *Movie Wednesday:* Late Marriage (Hatuna Meuheret)

**Wednesday, February 15, 1–3 p.m.**

February's Wednesday Movie at Temple Beth Emeth is *Late Marriage (Hatuna Meuheret)*. An Israeli film that centers on Zaza, the 31-year-old child of tradition-minded Georgian Jewish immigrants who are anxiously trying to arrange a marriage for him. Unbeknownst to them, he is secretly dating a 34-year-old divorcée, Judith. When his parents discover the relationship and violently intervene, Zaza must choose between his family traditions and his love. The film is in Hebrew and Kivruli, Judaeo-Georgian language. Snacks are provided and everyone is welcome.

### *Families with young children (FYC)*

**Shabbat Services times (Friday, February 3, 10, 17, 24)**

**Tot (0–5 years old) Shabbat Services led by Rabbi Levy and Cantor Annie Rose, 5:30 p.m.**

**Dinner for Tot Shabbat and Sukkat Shalom, 6 p.m.**

**Shira (Song Session), 6:30 p.m.**

**Sukkat Shalom (6–10 years old) Shabbat Services lead by Rabbi Delson and Cantor Annie Rose, 6:30 p.m.**

**Popsicle Oneg, 7 p.m.** ■

PHOTO BY GREGORY FOX.

**NPR's Allison Downey sharing her story with Temple Beth Emeth at the Year of Torah kickoff event**

# Why Parshat B'Shalach is for the birds

*Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the* WJN

The Torah portion we read from on the first Shabbat of February is B'Shalach. It tells the story of Pharoah sending the Jewish people out of Egypt and their coming to the Red Sea. God then performs the great miracle of splitting the Red Sea. The Torah tells us that after being saved, Moses along with the rest of the Jews sang the song of praise praising God for the miracle. The Midrash tells us that the birds and the animals also sang the song of praise along with the Jews. Therefore it has become a custom to put buckwheat (kasha) on the roof of one's house right before the Shabbat that we read about the splitting of the Red Sea. This is to give a reward to the birds, whose ancestors sang praises to God at the splitting of the Red Sea. So a question arises: Why do we give food to the birds but not to the animals whose predecessors also sang to God after the miracle? To answer the question we have to understand a few Jewish metaphysical concepts.

**Rabbi Aharon Goldstein**

In Judaism we see the world as being comprised of different levels of living things. We have the four metaphysical elements (in descending order of proximity to holiness) – fire, air, water, and earth. God created fish from only water. God created birds from a mixture of water and earth. Terrestrial animals were created from only earth - therefore they are on the lowest level. Speaking in a hierarchical sense of relative closeness to holiness, fish are of a highest level than other animals because they are created wholly from a higher element - water. Birds, being created from a combination of water and earth are next highest - lower than the fish but higher than most other animals. The other animals created from only earth are at the lowest level.

Why are these distinctions relevant?

One way they become relevant is in the context of the actions required for us to take nourishment. In order to eat from the animal kingdom we have to prepare them with a ritual in order for them to be used as food for our consumption. There are different ritual requirements depending on the level of holiness from which the creature originates. For fish there are no slaughtering requirements at all, we just have to gather them together and then they are ready to be food for us. For birds, we have to ritually slaughter them first. During the ritual of slaughtering the birds we have to make sure that at least one of the three major anatomical structures (signs) of the throat (trachea, esophagus, and artery) are cleanly severed and then they are ready to be food for us. For land animals we have to be certain that at least two of the three major anatomical structures are cleanly severed.

The rabbis explain these differences by distinguishing between killing and kosher slaughtering. What is the purpose of slaughtering in a kosher manner versus just killing the animal? To simply kill an animal for food there are many methods. When the Torah speaks about taking an animal's life for food it doesn't use the term "killing". It uses the term *shechita*, "to slaughter" as in ritual slaughter. In Hebrew the term for slaughtering, *shechitah*, also means "to bring in". When we kill an animal in a kosher manner, we are spiritually bringing it into our world so that we can use its energy and life force in the human realm for the purpose of doing God's will with our lives. The further a creature is from God the more that is required to bring it closer. The closer it is to God the less we have to do to prepare it. Fish, being created from water, are at a highest level than creatures created from earth, and therefore closer to God so there is no ritual slaughter required. A bird, since it is from a combination of water and earth, places it lower than a fish but higher than a land animal. Thus, it requires only one of the three major anatomical structures (signs) of the throat to be cleanly severed. The land animal, being the lowest and furthest from God in this hierarchy, needs at least two of the signs in order to be recognized as a kosher slaughter.

So, with the above explanations in place, we come back to the original question: Why do we reward only the birds for singing at the splitting of the Red Sea?

What's with the idea of singing a song? If one is happy, why can't we simply say "I am happy"? What's the singing for? The purpose of singing is to express oneself in a way that is beyond just saying words. Merely saying words cannot express the joy one feels. Also, words alone don't transmit the feeling of joy to others. In human nature we find that a simple person can be aroused to joy and song very easily. On the other hand, a very intellectual, cerebral person with a great intellectual capacity needs more stimulation in order to saturate the intellectualism until it can spill over into the expression of emotional joy –through song. A small thing won't move them to joy as it would with a simpler person. It takes much more to move them past the realm of cool intellectual analysis into the warmer realm of joy and its manifestation in song. So the greater the person intellectually, the more that is required to bring that person to the next level of joy expressed as singing and/or dancing.

Bearing this in mind, we can now go back to our original question regarding the custom of treating the birds and not the animals with kasha for Shabbos B'Shalach. The birds, being higher than the animals, require much more to cross the threshold into song than the animals that are lower than them. Their expression of joy, like that of the intellectual, was much harder to achieve than that of the simpler animals. Therefore we treat the birds and not the animals.

The basic lesson we learn from here is that the whole idea of singing is to show our appreciation for the great things that Hashem does for us. We should be moved beyond our intellectual capacity into the realm of pure joy expressed as singing and/or dancing when we recognize, with profound gratitude, our relationship to God and all that is done for us. With this in mind, we all should look forward to the coming of the Moshiach, when the entire earth will be filled with the knowledge of God and we all will be moved to such joy that we will sing the new song for the coming of Moshiach. May it be speedily in our days. ■

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## "'The Forward': Independent Jewish Journalism in the Age of Digital Media"

Samuel Norich,
publisher, *The Jewish Daily Forward*

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6:30 reception; 7:00 lecture
Forum Hall, Palmer Commons
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The publisher of America's most popular Jewish media brand reports on how his organization builds on its past to compete in the future. *The Forward*, founded as a Yiddish newspaper in 1897, today publishes digital and print editions in both English and Yiddish, in a media environment in rapid flux. What parts of the DNA of the Yiddish *Forverts*, read by immigrants a century ago, affect the reporting of Jewish and Israeli news and culture today? What strategies enable *The Forward* to compete both with general-interest, national publications on the one hand and local, Jewish weekly newspapers on the other? How does *The Forward* sustain its editorial independence, financially and organizationally? What content engages a younger audience with a far more tenuous connection with Israel and with their Jewish communities than their parents and grandparents had? What media strategies deliver that journalism to a generation shaped by social networks? In short, how has *The Forward* preserved its values and its historic mission while serving a much-changed American Jewish public?

For further details,
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Jean & Samuel Frankel Center

# Clergy push Debbie Friedman song

*By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

About two weeks before she died, Debbie Friedman stood with Rabbi Joy Levitt at the piano in Levitt's Manhattan apartment, and she shared with her friend a melody that the legendary singer and composer would never have the chance to record.It was a new version of "Shalom Aleichem," the hymn traditionally sung Friday evenings to welcome the Sabbath angels.

Friedman told her friend Rabbi Joy Levitt that her version of "Shalom Aleichem" would be her legacy. Friedman, who was in New York en route to the Limmud Festival in England, had sung the very same tune the previous night to Levitt's cousin, who was dying of breast cancer. "I think this is going to be my legacy. This is going to be bigger than Mi Sheberach," Friedman told Levitt, referring to her melody of the prayer for healing, which is widely used as part of the liturgy in liberal synagogues.

**Debbie Friedman**

A few days later, Levitt wrote Friedman an email saying, "You gave me such a huge gift and I'm going to make it my business that everyone knows this 'Shalom Aleichem.'" Levitt, who is the executive director of the JCC in Manhattan, never received a response.

Sick with the flu that would end her life, Friedman returned from England to her home in Southern California, where she died in a hospital on January 9, 2011. She was 59.

Since then, her "Shalom Aleichem" has been shared from one person and small group to the next, in an informal effort to weave the melody into the American Jewish canon. It is becoming increasingly popular at Friday night dinners and at Havdalah services, which mark the Sabbath's end.

In the coming days, Levitt and Cantor Angela Buchdahl, of Manhattan's Central Synagogue, are planning to reach out to every clergy member in the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements — urging them to sing Friedman's version of "Shalom Aleichem" on Feb. 3 and 4, which is Shabbat Shira, or the Sabbath of Song.

Buchdahl and musician Josh Nelson sang that very melody to a crowd of 700 people, who attended a memorial service for Friedman at Central Synagogue on January 27, 2011.

It was there that Vivian Lazar heard it for the first time. She brought it to HaZamir: The International Jewish High School Choir, which she directs. Some 300 HaZamir members sang it at their annual festival concert at Lincoln Center in March. Those high school students, from 18 U.S. cities and Israel, then took it back to their communities, Lazar said. "We are keeping Debbie's 'Shalom Aleichem' in our repertoire," Lazar said. "It's a song the kids love, and it's our attempt to distribute the song to a wider and newer audience."

The spring before she died, Friedman herself taught the melody to several hundred people at Hava Nashira, the annual Reform movement song leaders' gathering.

That summer, Friedman sang the song, which she was still tweaking, for a class she was leading at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion's School of Nonprofit Management in Los Angeles. Richard Siegel, the school's director, asked Friedman what she was working on. As Friedman sang her "Shalom Aleichem," a student recorded it on an iPhone.

Siegel has sung it every week since at his Shabbat table. "Once you get the hang of it, it's quite haunting," he said.

Most recently, Cantor Jennifer Frost sang it before 6,000 people who gatherde for the Union for Reform Judaism's biennial gathering, held in December. Attendees could also request a biennial CD, which included Friedman's version of "Shalom Aleichem," and about 650 people did, said URJ spokeswoman Annette Powers.

Though it is only now reaching a critical mass of synagogues and Shabbat tables, the melody was composed in 2009, according to Merri Lovinger Arian, who taught with her at HUC–JIR's cantorial school. That school has been renamed the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music.

"She grabbed me and said she wanted me to listen to it, and she said, 'Doesn't it really sound like we were born with that melody, that it's been around for a long time?'" Arian recalled. "She was right."

In addition to the Shabbat Shira effort, Friedman's "Shalom Aleichem" will be performed February 1 at a Central Synagogue tribute to the late musician, which follows her first yahrzeit.

"All of us were left with this piece we know she was so excited about, she really wanted to get it out there," Arian said. "Since it wasn't recorded there is a feeling that we have a responsibility to get this, of all melodies, out. We all feel a sense of urgency about it." ■

*This story originally appeared in the* Forward *newspaper. To read more, go to forward.com.*


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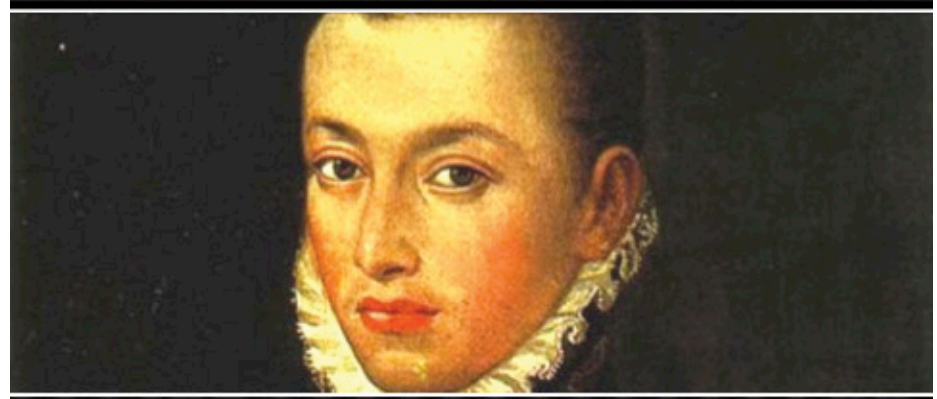

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# Jacob's trial: Hebrew court room at Hebrew Day School

*Dina Shtull, special to the* WJN

Fourth graders at Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor played out a court scene to determine whether Jacob acted morally when taking the birthright from his twin brother Esau and when tricking his father Isaac into giving him the blessing intended for his elder brother. Students played the roles of the attorneys, the witnesses, and the judge. The scene was un-scripted; characters on the witness stand answered whatever question was posed to them by the attorneys. All of the court proceedings were conducted in Hebrew. The spontaneous use of language to critically reflect on and analyze the Biblical story is the highest level of achievement for students studying a second language.

What did the students think of Jacob's actions? In his opening remarks, student Zachary Weissman, defense attorney, claimed that in tricking his father to get a special blessing, Jacob was not acting alone; he was listening to his mother. Following his mother's wishes was the respectful thing to do. Jacob did not steal the birthright; he engaged in an honest deal with his brother who preferred to have the bowl of soup. It was a win-win situation because both brothers received what they truly wanted. God also played a role in Jacob's decision, and Jacob was following a divine calling.

Student Gaya Pederson, attorney for the prosecution, claimed otherwise. While Jacob was following his mother's direction, he was at the same time deceiving and tricking his father and disregarding his father's wishes. The commandment is to honor *both* your mother and your father. Jacob's father was blind, and tricking a blind person is in violation of the commandment "Do not put a stumbling block in front of a blind person (Leviticus 19:14)." While the sale of the birthright was legal in that Esau agreed to sell it for a bowl of soup, Jacob was taking advantage of his brother who was at the time in a distressed emotional state.

Other students played the role of the witnesses. Called to the stand were Jacob himself, Isaac, Esau, and Rebecca. Jacob and Esau were asked if they thought their deal was fair. Isaac was asked why he proceeded to bless Esau if God's desire was otherwise. Rebecca was asked why she tricked her husband. The questions, and the opening and closing remarks, were all written by the students themselves.

"It was a good experience," said Gabe Seir. "We had to prep in many ways to be ready for any question." "If you really wanted to prove something," said Natan Bondin, "you had to keep asking questions." "It was hard to defend a client who most think is guilty," admitted Zachary Weissman. Dana Steiner who played Rebecca on the witness stand said that the lawyers "asked the same question in different ways. It was hard to find different ways to answer the same question."

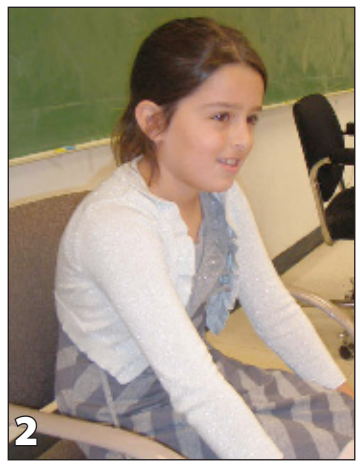
The students all agreed that the main idea they learned from the project was that one should not judge someone without having proof. "We needed to find proof from the text for our arguments," continued Bondin. "We had to go to the Torah for our reasons," said Seir. "We could not make assumptions." "A lot of people in our class will make great lawyers one day," said Bondin.

Participation in the court scene was a demonstration of academic skills that are developing in fourth grade. One of these skills is the ability to understand that some questions have more than one answer. The debate raised a complicated question that did not have a simple answer. Another is the ability to refer to details in a text to demonstrate comprehension and to draw inferences. Students were required to provide textual evidence for their testimonies. A third skill is effective public speaking. Students practiced looking at the lawyer, and speaking loudly and slowly — skills that are particularly challenging to do in a second language.

Additional academic goals related specifically to the study of Torah – the ability to distinguish in a verse between narrative, dialogue, and inner quotations; and the ability to use verb prefixes and suffixes as an aid in text comprehension.

The court case was one example of the development of critical thinking, a key 21st century skill, that is applied at Hebrew Day School in the study of secular and Biblical literature. Students often have debates when discussing a challenging question. "In fact," says teacher Aaron Magid, "everyday in class is a mini court case." ■

*More information about Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor can be found on the school's website www.hdsaa.org or by calling the office at 971-4633 to schedule a private tour.*



**1 Gabe Seir, as Jacob, on the witness stand**

**2 Talia Dunietz, playing Isaac, on the witness stand**

**3 Dana Steiner, playing Rebecca, on the witness stand**

**4 Gaya Pedersen, prosecuting attorney**

**5 Zachary Weissman, defense attorney**

**6 Attorneys for the defense, writing their closing remarks: Gabe Seir, Sophia Berry, Zachary Weissman, Dana Steiner**

**7 Rachel Siegel, playing the judge**

**8 Attorneys for the prosecution writing their closing remarks: Tom Dunietz, Talia Dunietz, Gaya Pedersen, Natan Bondin, Jesse Rosenberg**

# *Tuition incentives and scholarships at Hebrew Day School*

*Dina Shtull, special to the* WJN

## *Enrollment tuition incentive*

The Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor is offering a tuition incentive for children entering kindergarten. All families applying to the HDS kindergarten for the 2012–2013 academic year will be entitled to an enrollment tuition of $10,000 for the kindergarten child. This represents close to a 20 percent reduction from the current tuition rate. Applications are due by February 6, 2012.

The offer is contingent on formal acceptance of the student. The additional sibling discount and the early tuition incentive cannot be combined for the kindergarten. Other fees remain obligatory (registration, book and supply, PTO). Families may also apply for scholarships that are based on demonstrated need.

## *Scholarship process*

Each year, the HDS designates a substantial amount of scholarships to assist families with demonstrated need. A loan may also be offered if a family is only temporarily financially impaired. The scholarship program helps ensure that the school maintains its diverse and inclusive student population.

This past year $145,000 was allocated in scholarships. Of that amount, $76,000 came from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. Over the last few years, at least 90 percent of all applicants received an offer of either a grant or a loan. Approximately 30 percent of HDS students receive financial assistance.

Privacy and confidentiality are of utmost importance in the process. Parents submit financial information and documentation to an online service used by independent schools throughout the country. A local committee reviews recommendations from this service. To preserve the privacy of the applying families, the committee does not include any present HDS parents, and all proceedings are kept confidential. The online application form may be viewed at http://sss.nais.org/Parents using the school code of 1404. There is an application fee of $37. Information about data security and privacy regarding the online documents can be found at http://sss.nais.org/schools then click on the "Comp*Assist online" tab and pick "Information Security" from the drop down menu. Further questions about scholarships can be directed to hdsscholarship@hdsaa.org.

# Afternoons are fun at the ECC

*Peretz Hirshbein, special to the* WJN

The JCC Early Childhood Center has always been glad to offer parents extremely customizable scheduling options; the minimum schedule is two half-days per week and many parents combine both full-days and half-days. Almost all of the preschool-aged children at the ECC attend during the morning, but after lunch, some go home and some stay for the afternoon. What is the experience like for those who stay?

**Maya Raveh, Sylvie Bleckman, Esther Zekic, and Elliot Parker team up to create a square during a math large group time**

After rest time, preschoolers return to their group time carpets for a second beginning of the day. Teachers and children consult their classroom message boards to see what will be happening that afternoon. Will they have Gym with Kim? Will their teachers have a cool large-group time activity for them? Will Noreen come to do Israeli dancing with the class? Will Peretz bring his box of costumes for Torah Stories?

Anyone who has spent any amount of time in the JCC has heard gym teacher Kim Braun. With young children, Kim takes a unique approach that breaks popular sports down into their fundamental pieces – throwing, kicking, running, taking turns, and more. The preschoolers' main time with her is on Thursday mornings, but during the beginning of the week, each preschool class gets an extra session with her in the afternoon.

Music has a large place in the ECC. The ECC's has several song leaders who spend time with all age groups several mornings per week. But in the afternoon the classroom teachers get a chance to use music and movement to teach many different concepts. Sometimes, music is used to teach children how to use their bodies – what kind of locomotor and non-locomotor movements can our bodies do? As the teachers plan each day, they create large-group activities that connect music and movement to the rest of the curriculum. Recently, ECC teachers have been using music and movement to teach math concepts.

Director Noreen De Young spends some of her time during the afternoon bringing Israeli dance to the ECC's students. Noreen has long loved Israeli dancing, and when Florida-based Israeli dance guru Silvio Berflein conducted a workshop for Ann Arbor Jewish educators a number of years ago, Noreen became skilled at simplifying Israeli dance for young children. Each classroom has their favorite dances; calls for their favorites are loud when Noreen works with the children.

ECC Assistant Director Peretz Hirshbein uses children's love of narratives, as well as their enthusiasm for dramatic play to bring the stories of Genesis and Exodus to life with the ECC's preschoolers several afternoons a week. He arrives in the classroom toting a large bin of biblical-looking costumes, and asks the children, "Who wants to be in the story?" Each week the children recall which characters they had portrayed the week before, and what happened to them, before moving on to act out the next part of the story as Peretz narrates. The Matriarchs and Patriarchs come to life for the children, and become meaningful figures for them.

Afternoons are indeed rich at the ECC. For more information, contact Noreen De Young, JCC Early Childhood director, at 971-0990 or via email at noreendeyoung@jccfed.org. ■

**Teacher Carolyn McCombs and Edison McGovern work together to measure Edison's jumps**

# JCC youth programs

*Shoshana Jackson, special to the* WJN

## *JCC to offer snow day programs*

The Youth Department of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor will once again offer Snow Day programs this winter. On days when the JCC is able to open but Ann Arbor Public Schools are cancelled due to winter weather conditions, a Snow Day program will be offered from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. for students in grades K–5; middle school students may participate as helpers for a reduced fee. Students will enjoy games, crafts, gym time, and fun in the snow (weather permitting).

Snow Day programs are for JCC members only. Registration in advance is not required, but parents will be asked to fill out a registration form and submit payment when they arrive. The cost for each Snow Day is $50; additional siblings and Kids' Konnection and Kids' Club participants receive discounts.

## *Kids' Night Out program on February 11*

The JCC will host a Kids' Night Out program on February 11 from 6:30-10 p.m. for students in grades K–5. This month's KNO will feature an optional talent show (those electing not to display their talents will still get to watch the show), pizza dinner and a screening of Kung Fu Panda 2. The cost for the Kids' Night Out is $20 for JCC members (additional siblings $18). Non-members must include a $5 surcharge. Registration and payment are due by Wednesday, February 8.

## *February break program offerings*

The JCC will offer February Break Fun Day programs from 8 am–6 pm on February 20–24. Each February Break Fun Day will feature a fun field trip or special activity, plus crafts, games, and gym time or outdoor recess. Students may sign up for one or more days. Programming details for each day will be available in early February.

The February Break Fun Day programs are for JCC members ONLY in grades K–5; middle school students are also welcome to participate as helpers for a reduced fee. The cost for each day is $38 for care from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. ($34 for additional siblings) and $10 for Extended Care from 4–6 p.m. Registration and payment are due by Monday, February 13. ■

*For registration forms or more information about JCC youth programs, visit www.jccannarbor.org or contact Shoshana Jackson at shoshanajackson@jccfed.org or 971-0990.*

# *JCC seeks teen athletes for Maccabi Games*

*Shoshana Jackson, special to the* WJN

Each summer the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor sends a team of athletes to the JCC Maccabi Games, an Olympic-style sporting competition that incorporates community service and social activities to combine for an unforgettable experience for Jewish teens.

This summer, Memphis, Tennessee, is celebrating the 30th Anniversary since it first hosted Maccabi Games. Ann Arbor athletes have been invited to join these games from August 5–10. Teens will be able to compete in boys baseball, girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, dance, track and field, swimming, tennis, table tennis and new this year, boys lacrosse and co-ed flag football. Teens must be 13–16 years old as of July 31, 2012.

Participation in the Maccabi Games is an enriching experience both within the context of the competition as well as getting to meet Jews from around the nation. The five days of programming include athletic competitions, opening ceremonies at the FedEx Forum (Memphis Grizzlies' arena), a party a the Memphis Zoo, a special night with host families, a party at the Pink Palace (Memphis' living history museum, like the Henry Ford) and the always-memorable closing ceremonies.

Athletes of all abilities are welcome to participate, and scholarship assistance is available for qualifying families. A limited number of spots are available, so interested families are encouraged to contact Shoshana Jackson as soon as possible at shoshanajackson@jccfed.org or 971-0990.

# *Spend the snowy winter months with Ken Pardes*

*Matan Naamani, special to the* WJN

Camp Tavor, a Zionist, Jewish summer camp located near Kalamazoo, Michigan, is the summer home-away-from-home for many Jewish Ann Arbor kids between June and August. Camp Tavor, which is associated with the youth movement Habonim Dror North America, provides *chanichim* (campers) with a meaningful Jewish community, progressive and Zionist values, an appreciation for Jewish culture and Hebrew, and memories and friends that last a lifetime. Many *madrichim* (counselors) at Tavor are from Ann Arbor and grew up in and continue to be involved with the Jewish community in Ann Arbor. However, with winter well underway, the summer can seem far away and distant. Fortunately, there is still a way stay involved with and learn more about Habonim Dror and Camp Tavor.

Habonim Dror and Camp Tavor run a *ken* (local chapter) in Ann Arbor. The Ann Arbor Ken, known as Ken Pardes, meets regularly during the school year to celebrate holidays, build community, run educational and fun activities with new and old friends. Members of the Ann Arbor chapter range from early elementary school through high school. Ken Pardes is run by members of the Ann Arbor Jewish community who are also *madrichim* (counselors) at Camp Tavor; many are students at the University of Michigan. The ken provides experienced Tavor *chanichim* (campers) and families with a meaningful way to continue their Tavor experience and is also a great place for new and prospective families to learn more about Camp Tavor.

A complete list of Ken Pardes events this semester can be found in the Camp Tavor ad in this issue of the WJN. For more information on Ken Pardes, contact Matan Naamani at ken.annarbor@gmail.com or call 904-6578.

# Summer at Muss High School creates Israel connection

*Hannah Sherman, special to the* WJN

This summer I attended the Alexander Muss High School in Israel program (AMHSI). This program is eight-weeks long, and is based on its own campus in Hod Hasharon, a small suburban town north of Tel Aviv. AMHSI includes daily classes on the history of the land of Israel, from biblical to modern times. As a way to really "live" the history we are studying, we go on *tiyulim* (treks) to visit sites that correspond with what we are learning about. As we were studying the reign of Saul and the prophetess Devorah, for example, we went on a hike up Mount Gilboa. At this spot, and Har Tavor nearby, we literally walked on the same places that were so significant in the lives of these ancient Jewish leaders.

We often had classes on our *tiyulim* and would always discuss how we felt about the specific place. As a result, I found that I was able to feel more connected to the sites, and the texts, because we examined and discussed why each part of the country was linked to our history as Jews and our history in the land of Israel. In this process, these connections became very personal.

**Hannah Sherman in Israel**

The AMHSI classes are small and discussion based, so each student is truly involved in the lesson. Depending on the size of the group, there are either two or three teachers. Classes meet separately at the base campus, but the group always travels together and has joint classes on *tiyulim*. I elected to take my courses for high school credit (yes, there are papers and tests), but learning in such an active, engaging environment was fun and meaningful.

I am deeply grateful and honored to have been a recipient of the Susan L. Lichter Memorial Israel Scholarship. I was also fortunate to receive additional support from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor and Beth Israel Congregation. I made great friends in Israel this summer, and the unique experience of AMHSI enhanced my commitment to Israel in a lasting way. In fact, as a result of this experience, I decided I wanted to spend an even longer period of time in Israel. I arranged to graduate high school a semester early in order to do an intensive *ulpan* in Jerusalem and a five-month environmental internship in the Negev desert. As a Jewish American, I have always felt a certain connection to Israel, but after this summer I feel I now have a personal relationship with the land and a place with its people. ■

*Hannah Sherman is a recent graduate of Huron High School. She was a recipient of the 2011 Susan L. Lichter Memorial Scholarship for teen travel to Israel.*

# "Hallelujah" competition in Israel offers unique experience

*Mara Abramson, special to the* WJN

With the help of the Jewish Federation's Susan L. Lichter Memorial Endowed Scholarship and Beth Israel Congregation's Eli M. Ladin Israel Scholarship fund (and Mom and Dad), I was lucky enough to spend the summer of 2010 with some of my closest friends traveling in Israel—a country whose people, culture, heritage, sights and traditions I could only describe as exquisite. While in Israel, I accomplished all I had been hoping to do. I learned about the land, I ate the falafel, and came back feeling more whole and entirely reassured with my Zionism, or at least, my ability to evaluate Israel's actions and stand by her whether I disagree with her or not.

However, standing in my kitchen with my mother in the weeks following my return, I felt as though something were missing. I remember saying to her, in tears: "I feel like I didn't take advantage of being there; I didn't care enough about the places or the history, I just cared about being with my friends. I can't believe I messed this up." While in retrospect I realize I was being entirely overdramatic, I understand why I was feeling that way. My trip was through Young Judaea, my youth movement in which I've made many incredible friends from around the USA, so naturally, I spent a great deal of my time bonding with them. I hung out with Americans teenagers, speaking English, listening to American music, talking about American TV shows, etc. Although there's absolutely nothing wrong with this, I came back feeling a terrible sense of guilt—not that I wasted the opportunity given, but that I hadn't gotten out of it all that I could. I came back feeling as though I'd spent my time as an American who just happened to be traveling in Israel rather than a traveler in Israel who just happened to be American. This summer, however, was a whole different story.

In February 2011 I caught wind of "Hallelujah," a new, global Jewish singing competition with an aim to strengthen relations between young Jews in Israel and the Diaspora using music as the medium. The competition was set to take place in Ramat HaSharon, Israel, in August. I submitted an audition video on a whim, and to my surprise, after months of anticipation, I was informed in early July that I had made the top 30 and was invited to come to Israel to compete for the title of "The Jewish Star" (punny, huh!?). Although Hallelujah would cover all expenses for the competition other than travel, with only a little over a month to get ready for my departure, I was very anxious about how I would be able to pay for the flight. Thankfully, I am a member of a Jewish community that values Israel travel for teens, and with the help of Beth Israel Congregation, the Jewish Federation's Israel experience subsidy, and the remainder of my bat mitzvah money, I gathered the funds to cover the travel.

**Mara with members of the IDF band "Kit Bag"**

My month in Israel will long remain one of the most important and defining experiences of my life. This summer, I did everything I could as to make sure I wouldn't come home with any regrets. I paid attention to where I was and asked questions about the land, my surroundings, and the local way of life. I worked on my Hebrew and came back with a much better sounding "reysh" and a head start on my Hebrew 101 class, and I made friends I know I will keep for the rest of my life. I honestly think the reason why I gained more and grew more through this experience than any other in my life was because this was the first time I ever truly embarked on something on my own—with no expectations and nothing to hold me back. This was the first time I ever traveled anywhere or did anything where no one knew me from before, and I got the opportunity to share myself and be an adult for the very first time. I found this competition and auditioned for it without telling my parents, and once I got in, they were very skeptical. Because "Hallelujah" is a new, fairly unknown project, it required a lot of research and debating skills to convince them of the value of this experience.

Although I was eliminated after the semi-final round and didn't do as well in the competition as I'd hoped I would, the experience I had is one that I could never replicate. I made friends with young Jews from all around the world, including Holland, Belgium, Australia, England, Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Argentina, and Canada. This international group was joined by a group of Israeli soldiers from an army band called "Kit Bag" who worked with Hallelujah as part of their army service. I developed close relationships with these Israelis of my age, something I wish I'd had more of an opportunity to do on my previous trip. Without them my experience in Israel would in no way have been as rich. Spending time with these soldiers was easily the most important part of this trip for me, for they showed me what it's like to be a teen growing up on the other side of the world. They took me around and showed me what they did on the weekends, took me home to their families to have a comfortable bed and home-cooked meal for a weekend, introduced me to their friends and army commanders, and if even for just the three-weeks I was there, I felt like I was so important to these people and so much a part of their lives. I finally felt like I was a real part of Israel. ■

*Mara Abramson is a freshman at Michigan State University in the Residential College in the Arts & Humanities. She participated in the Hallelujah-Global Jewish Singing Contest (http://www.facebook.com/Hallelujah.Star) in August 2011.*

ב"ה

# Camp Gan Israel 2012

## June 25 - August 10, 2012

**9:00 AM - 3:45 PM**

**Extended hours: 8:00-9:00 AM & 3:45-6:00 PM**

**Location: Clonlara School 1289 Jewett Ave.**

## Why Camp Gan Israel?

- Dedicated and loving counselors
- iCamp - Campers can customize their own experience from over 20 specialties (science, drama, music, etc.)
- Professional sports program, including i9 sports
- Superb swim program
- Bi-Weekly field trips
- Fully Air-Conditioned facility
- Special Adventure Pioneer Camp for campers entering grades 5-8

## A SUMMER OF FUN... A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES

Web: www.mycampganisrael.com · Phone: 734-995-3276 x5 · Email: director@mycampganisrael.com

# Is your camp right for my child?

*Noah Gallagher, special to the* WJN

Choosing a summer camp for your child can be daunting. Here in the Midwest, there is no shortage of excellent Jewish summer camps. Choosing the right camp is about finding the right "fit" for your family and the individual child. Asking the right questions of the camp's professional staff can help you determine the best place for your child to have a first-time summer camp experience.

Camp directors find that most parents ask the same questions about camp. The questions usually have to do about camp's daily routine, camper to counselor ratio, variety of activities, facilities and living quarters. These are, of course, important questions, but I encourage parents to ask different kinds of questions to get a real sense of the kind of experience their child will have.

### *Where do your campers come from?*

Some camps draw the majority of their campers from a single area or a few communities. Sometimes, geographic diversity can vary between age groups and sessions. If the majority of the campers in a bunk are from the same town or even the same school, a child's social experience can be drastically different depending on whether or not the child is part of the group.

### *What is the staff like? Where do you find your counselors and staff?*

Some camps have a staff comprised primarily of alumni, some camps use camp staffing services that draw talented young men and women from all over the world and many use a bit of both. Asking about how a camp chooses its staff gives parents a better understanding of what kind of role models their children will have during their camp experience. While it is certainly important for a camp's professional staff to inspire confidence, it is a camper's relationship with their counselors that will have the most impact on their experience.

### *What is the social environment like at your camp?*

What does the camp do to create an environment that is free of bullying? What kinds of training and systems are in place? In addition to being an environment where children feel physically safe, a camp should be a place where children feel emotionally safe. A camp should have a clear plan in place to recognize negative social dynamics and address conflicts among campers.

**Ann Arbor campers and staff enjoying second session at CYJ**

**Gavi Forman, from Ann Arbor, and Maia Grosser, from Minneapolis, hanging out on the lake**

### *What kind of communication can I expect from camp?*

I often get questions about letter-writing, the availability of online photos and email, but I rarely get questions about how we handle things like severe weather. A camp's emergency plan should address children's emotional safety as well as their physical safety. It should also include a way to inform parents in the event of an emergency at camp.

If your child is sick, or needs to see a doctor (or even an orthodontist for a broken bracket), you should hear from the camp long before you get a letter from your child describing the incident or a bill from an unfamiliar doctor. If your child has to spend the night in the camp's health center, will you get a call?

Sometimes, letters home include cause for concern. Most of the time, a camper was feeling a little homesick when he or she wrote that letter asking to be airlifted back to Ann Arbor, and is having a blast by the time you read the letter a couple days later. Regardless, the camp staff should have a way for you to check up on your child. If the camp posts photos, you can ask the camp to try to "catch them in the act" of enjoying camp.

Some camps allow campers to send "emails" back to their parents by filling out a page that is faxed to a service that will send you a scanned copy of your child's letter. Some camps choose not to do this for a variety of reasons. Some camps will scan a letter and email it to you if you are far away during the time your child is at camp. Asking a camp about their communication policies and plans can be an important factor in finding the best fit.

Campers and parents often choose camps based on the availability of particular activities or the location of the camp, but the decision to return to a particular camp the following summer – or not to return – often has to do with how a camp addresses the issues mentioned above. As you research summer camps, ask the questions of the staff and follow up with parents of campers that have spent time in a particular camp to hear about it from their perspective.

While waterskiing or archery might be what attracts you and your child to a particular camp, the less tangible aspects of the camp experience are what keeps kids coming back. ■

*Noah Gallagher is busy planning for his fifth summer as director of Camp Young Judaea Midwest in Waupaca, Wisconsin. CYJ Midwest staff will be in Ann Arbor on February 5 to meet with current and prospective camp families. To find out more about CYJ Midwest, go to www.cyjmid.org.*

# At Camp Gan Israel, hidden talents revealed

*David Alpert, special to the* WJN

Sports. Trips. Games. Many summer camps feature a similar curriculum of activities that aim to provide children with a fun-filled getaway from the school year.

But at Camp Gan Israel in Ann Arbor, Shternie Zwiebel, director of the camp, is driven by a different philosophy.

"Every child has a different skill set," Zwiebel insists. "Because every child is so unique, we've placed a lot of emphasis on diversifying our curriculum to help every child discover their talents."

To that end, several new activities were rolled out at a seven-week long camp last year. I9 Sports, a national franchise whose coaches place special emphasis on sportsmanship and principle-driven play, ran the sports curriculum last summer. I9 pushes a philosophy of "inclusivity," where every child becomes an essential part of the game.

Musically-oriented children found their niche with Oz Music, a music group who ran music lessons at camp. Their mission statement is to tap into hidden musical talent, and help current music students discover new ways to create music.

Waltzing around camp last year were a sophisticated segment of campers who perfected their techniques and learned something new from local professional teachers.

**Counselor Elianna Zeller and camper Simon Shavit**

Zwiebel doesn't stop pushing the envelope. Gym America set up shop last summer in the middle of the camp, with full-blown gymnastics course for children. For other kids, art teachers visited camp to teach sculpting, weaving, and range of other kinds of art media.

This year, Zwiebel has a host of new activities on the launching pad for the summer camping season. Parents are counting down the days.

"My son can't wait to get the calendar for next year to see what we will be doing," said Nikki Klien.

Parents are noticing the attention to detail and well thought out, comprehensive schedule. "So much thought goes into planning adventures and daily trips and activities," said Liora Rosen. Parents looking to enroll their children into Camp Gan Israel can do so as soon February 15, when registration officially opens.

The emphasis on cultivating creative talents sets up the camp on the right dynamics. And when this range of diverse activities coalesces into one cohesive curriculum, says Zwiebel, the "sky's the limit for campers at Camp Gan Israel." ■

*For more information or to register contact Shternie Zwiebel, at 995-3276 #5, or at director@mycampganisrael.com.*

# In entering Israeli politics, Yair Lapid eyes force of socioeconomic protests

*By Linda Gradstein*

JERUSALEM (JTA)—One of the big open questions after Israel's social protests last summer was whether or not the one-time mass movement would be able to translate its newfound clout into lasting political power.

During the weeks of protests and for months afterward, none of Israel's political parties seemed able to capture the demonstrators' voice or allegiances.

But that could change with the entry into politics of one of Israel's most popular journalists and TV personalities, Yair Lapid, son of the late Shinui Party leader Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, who also was a journalist.

Polls show that the younger Lapid, who is expected to form a new centrist secular political party, could receive up to 20 seats in Israel's 120-seat Knesset, making him a potent political force.

While Lapid has refused to give interviews since his Jan. 8 announcement, a column he penned in Israel's daily Yediot Achronot offered a glimpse of what his platform will be: "Where's the money?"

"This is the big question asked by Israel's middle class, the same sector on whose behalf I'm going into politics," Lapid wrote. "Where's the money? Why is it that the productive sector, which pays taxes, fulfills its duties, performs reserve service and carries the entire country on its back, doesn't see the money?"

Lapid's political gambit constitutes an assault on Israel's politically powerful haredi Orthodox minority at a time of heightened tensions between secular and haredi Israelis. In his column, Lapid had harsh words for haredim, few of whom serve in the army but many of whom are recipients of government largesse.

"For many years now, the State of Israel has been subjugated to extortionist, shameless interest groups, some of them non-Zionist even, which misuse our distorted system of government in order to rob the middle class of its money," wrote Lapid, who for years has flirted with entering politics.

A day after Lapid resigned from his job as anchorman of Israel's Channel Two Friday night news magazine to prepare for his run for Knesset, another well-known Israeli, Noam Shalit, declared that he also would be a candidate for Knesset.

Shalit, who became a household name in the five-year effort to free his soldier son, Gilad, from Hamas captivity, will run on the Labor Party list. The soft-spoken Shalit said he wants to give something back to the country that worked so hard to free his son.

Israel's next elections are scheduled to take place in early 2013, but a vote could come sooner if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calls for new elections or if the current governing coalition falls. In any case, Lapid's run could dramatically change the Israeli political game, some analysts say.

"This is potentially an explosive transformation," said Rabbi Uri Regev, the director of Hiddush, an organization that promotes religious freedom in Israel.

A poll conducted by Hiddush found that 43 percent of the general Israeli public and 55 percent of the secular public welcomes Lapid's entry into politics. One-third of the respondents said they would seriously consider voting for Lapid whether he forms a new party or joins an established one.

"This may be the beginning of the end of the dominion of the haredi parties," Regev said.

But other analysts said Lapid simply will split the center and left-wing vote even further because he will be unable to make inroads into the right-religious bloc headed by Netanyahu.

"This could galvanize the same 20 to 30 seats that belong to this middle-class, secular, mostly Ashkenazi agenda," said Guy Be-Porat, a professor of public policy at Ben-Gurion University. "If you have four parties competing for the same votes, even if you divide it differently, it's still the same."

Ben-Porat said that unless Lapid can appeal to the center-right Likud, Sephardic and Orthodox voters, there will be no change in Israel's political constellation.

Efforts to form a secular, centrist party have been tried.

Lapid's father led Shinui to an impressive 15 seats in the 2003 elections. Shinui promised the public secular marriage and to sharply cut subsidies to haredim. Neither happened, and by 2006 Shinui had split into a coalition of smaller parties, none of which have made it into the Knesset.

Lapid hopes that by tapping into last summer's social protest movement he can ride an emerging political wave into the Knesset.

Last summer's protests, which brought hundreds of thousands of Israelis into the streets, focused on the high costs of living in Israel, particularly for young families. Netanyahu responded by forming a government committee led by economist Manuel Trajtenberg to suggest changes to Israel's tax code, housing practices and social welfare system.

Several of those recommendations have become law, including increases in the marginal tax and corporate tax rates, and the extension of free child education to Israeli children beginning at age 3.

Part of Lapid's appeal is that he is not a politician. He made the jump from journalism after the Knesset introduced a bill that would have required journalists to take a six-month "cooling-off period" between leaving journalism and entering politics; it was dubbed the Lapid Law. Lapid made his announcement before the law was finalized, and the measure has since been dropped.

Shalit's entry into politics is expected to make less of a splash.

"After years of public struggle, during which I got to know Israeli society in depth in all its beauty and values, I decided to enter public activity in order to serve the public and be in a position where I can influence the character of Israeli society," Shalit said. "The Labor Party is a social-democratic party that strives for peace, which is why it is my natural home. I believe that under the leadership of Shelly Yachimovich, Labor can lead important measures for Israeli society."

Shalit's announcement was greeted with mixed reactions. Some criticized Shalit for using his son's captivity as a springboard for entering politics, while others said he could bring a welcome calm to the Knesset.

"Politics is about serving the people, and I believe him when he says he wants to serve," said Professor Gideon Rahat of Hebrew University and the Israel Democracy Institute. "It's good that good people are coming into politics."

Rahat criticized Lapid for trying to start his own party rather than joining an existing centrist party, such as Kadima, which Ariel Sharon formed in 2005 as a centrist breakaway from Likud.

"We've seen these 'flash' parties come and go," Rahat said. "They come and say the system is corrupt and they want to change it. But then either they disappear or collapse or split or become corrupt."

Kadima, which is the Knesset's largest faction with 28 seats—one more than Likud—remains an exception, though polls show Kadima would lose its leading position if elections were held today.

Several Israeli analysts said Lapid might have more impact if he challenges Tzipi Livni for Kadima's leadership rather than striking out on his own. ■

# Op-Ed: Why Jews should care about the rights of Israeli Arabs

*By Rabbi Sid Schwarz*

WASHINGTON (JTA)—About a year and half ago, I participated in a fact-finding mission to Israel sponsored by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arabs (IATF). Established in 2006 as a consortium of some of the major organizations in American Jewish life -- including the Joint Distribution Committee, the Conference of Presidents, Jewish Federations of North America, the ADL and the American Jewish Committee -- the IATF is committed to raising awareness of the circumstances of the 20 percent of Israel's citizens who are Arab.

The issue was not new to me. A large part of my rabbinate has been devoted to advancing human and civil rights at home and abroad. Because I love Israel deeply, I was long concerned that issues of human and civil rights were raised only by progressive organizations, both in Israel and abroad. It was long overdue for the Jewish communal establishment to understand why the rights of Israeli Arabs should be a priority for anyone concerned with Israel's future.

Upon my return from the mission we established the first local affiliate of the IATF in the country in Washington, D.C. The Greater Washington Forum on Israeli Arab Issues (GWFIA) was dedicated to educating the local Jewish community about Jewish-Arab relations in Israel, including the economic, educational and social challenges faced by Israel's Arab citizens.

The test of any democracy is how it treats it minorities. It is all the more challenging in Israel because it was founded as a Jewish state. However, there have always been non-Jewish citizens living in Israel and the country's Declaration of Independence guarantees them full equality.

Arabs today make up 20 percent of Israel's population yet they represent only 1 percent of the gross domestic product. There are vast inequalities between Jews and Arabs in Israel in terms of the schools they attend, the municipal services they receive and the employment opportunities available to them. Israel's own government admits that they have a long way to go to create true parity for Israeli Arabs.

It is worth noting that the in forming the GWFIA, we were committed to having the representation of the full range of our Jewish community. Our steering committee now includes the Israeli Embassy, the Washington Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Relations Council. At our first Community Education Day last January, 300 people showed up for a four-hour program on a Sunday afternoon.

We succeeded in drawing many younger Jews who are thirsty for a conversation about Israel that is rigorous and honest but who, for the most part, have absented themselves from the Israel conversation sponsored by Jewish communal groups. Even more importantly, we were able to attract to our event both those who would identify with the political right and with the political left. Nonetheless, the conversation at our event last year was both civil and respectful.

I am well aware that there are those in the community who would deem this effort to be misguided. They will offer a list of reasons why Israel is still a country at risk. They are not wrong about that sad reality, but their disdain for efforts that might help Israeli Arabs enjoy full equality is shortsighted.

There are dangerous trends in Israel today that threaten the country's democratic character. Racist attitudes are on the rise and the Knesset is now considering several pieces of legislation that are overtly discriminatory. It is clear that Israel is not immune from the religious extremism that has poisoned Islam in recent years.

Jews who care about Israel should pay as much heed to the Jewish state's democratic character as they do about its security. This position was eloquently framed at last year's program by Noam Katz, the Israeli Embassy's minister for public diplomacy.

He said: "The Israeli-Arab and the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts are full of bitterness, bad blood and mistrust. The self identity of Arabs in Israel is strongly linked and connected to the Arab nation and the Palestinian people. It makes the effort more difficult. However, it doesn't exempt us, as a nation, as society and as a government, from trying to make it work ... These relations are a test of our national vision and morals, and a vital issue to the survival of Israel as a Jewish state and democratic society."

Democracy is not a right/left issue. At the core of democracy is a respect for the infinite value of every human being, a central premise of the Jewish teaching that every person is made b'tzelem elohim, "in the image of God."

In its brief history, Israel can boast many great achievements. If Israel could successfully meet the aspirations of its Declaration of Independence and accord its Arab minority the same opportunities and rights enjoyed by its Jewish citizens, it will have accomplished something that few other countries in the world have done—and under the most challenging of circumstances.

This is a cause worth rallying around. ■

*Rabbi Sid Schwarz is the founder of the PANIM Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values and the co-chair of the Greater Washington Forum on Israeli Arab Issues. He is the author of "Judaism and Justice: The Jewish Passion to Repair the World."*

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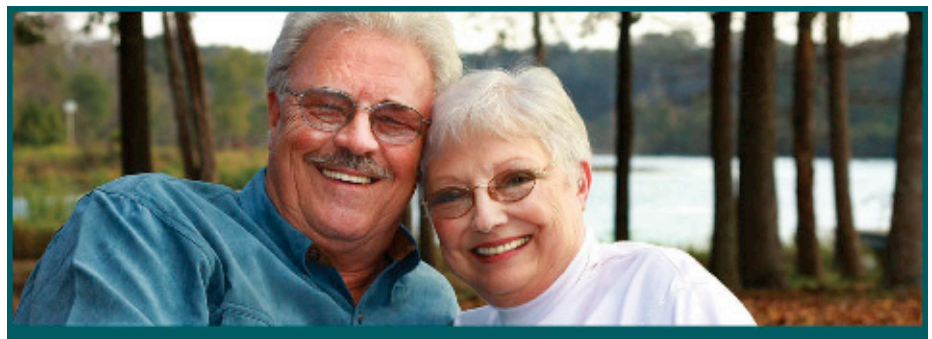

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# With Jack Lew's appointment, Jewish community again has a White House address

*By Ron Kampeas*

WASHINGTON (JTA)—@JewishWhiteHouse is back.

President Obama last month announced that Jack Lew, his director of the Office of Budget and Management—a Cabinet-level position—would replace William Daley as White House chief of staff.

Lew, 56, was chosen for his long years in government and his reputation as a skilled multitasker—he was top- budget cruncher for Bill Clinton before reprising the job for Obama—but Jewish officials were offering a sigh of relief for a subsidiary reason: Their who-we-gonna-call pleas were answered.

Since Dennis Ross, Obama's top Iran adviser, announced his departure late last year, community officials wondered who was left to call in a White House that has hemorrhaged top Jews over the last year or so. Lew, an Orthodox Jew, is close to the community and is a go-to person for Jewish events in the capital.

"The reports that there's no one to talk to have always been exaggerated," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Hoenlein pointed to Peter Rouse, a counselor to Obama who has served as acting chief of staff, as someone who has always been accessible.

Still, Hoenlein added, "Jack being there will be beneficial, it will foster communication."

Obama launched his administration with a strong contingent of Jewish advisers: In addition to Ross, David Axelrod was his top political adviser, Rahm Emanuel was his chief of staff and Daniel Shapiro handled the Levant desk at the National Security Council.

Emanuel quit in late 2010 to run for Chicago mayor, Axelrod left soon after to help run Obama's re-election campaign and Shapiro is now in Tel Aviv as ambassador.

That left a perceived gap in the White House—one that Lew would fill, although Jewish officials stressed that they did not expect the attention from a chief of staff that they received from mid-level staffers.

"That's not the role he's going to play," said Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, referring to the regular conference calls that Ross and Shapiro had with Jewish community leaders. "He will be an adviser to the president on all things and a gatekeeper, but to the extent the president will turn to him for his view, he has an understanding of the community and of its views."

The Obama administration clearly wanted to push across the Jewish message; Shapiro Tweeted the news in Hebrew to his followers. Israeli ambassadors don't usually make a big deal of the appointment of a White House chief of staff.

Obama stressed Lew's management savvy in announcing the appointment on Monday.

"Jack's economic advice has been invaluable and he has my complete trust, both because of his mastery of the numbers, but because of the values behind those numbers," he said.

Lew has become something of a go-to Obama administration speaker and guest for the organized Jewish community, particularly among Orthodox Jews. Most recently, he lit the "national menorah," the giant chanukiyah that graces the National Mall and is organized by American Friends of Lubavitch.

"As an American Jew, I can't think of anyone who has a deeper commitment to the United States as well as his own Jewish identity at the same time," said Rabbi Levi Shemtov, who heads the Chabad group and noted that Lew occasionally stops by for Shabbat services. "His appointment obviously gives the White House an envoy to the Jewish community who is eloquent, respected, even beloved across the Jewish spectrum. That's probably an added bonus rather than the core qualification."

Lew maintains a reliable shtick in his interaction with Jewish audiences: How he balances the 24/7 demands of being a top government official with the 24/6 Sabbath-observant lifestyle.

One incident involves a Shabbat call he received from President Clinton. He came home from synagogue and the phone rang. As was his practice, he waited until the answering machine clicked on to see if it was urgent enough to pick up. As it happened, it was a White House staffer telling him to ignore the earlier message from Clinton, who had been phoning from overseas and had forgotten that in Washington it was still Shabbat. The matter was not urgent enough to interrupt Lew's observance, Clinton told the staffer to tell Lew.

Going out of his way to keep Lew from breaking the Sabbath was a sign of the respect the president has for his observance, Lew tells people.

Another favorite line during his 1990s stint, when he lived in Washington—his family is now based in New York—was an exchange with clergy at Beth Sholom, a synagogue in Potomac, Md. Nathan Diament, who directs the Orthodox Union's Washington office, recalled that a rabbi would suggest jokingly that Lew might want to run for shul treasurer. Lew would rejoin that directing the OMB was complex enough, thank you very much.

It's a shtick that suggests a corny, old-fashioned sense of humor, but friends say it's also one that is emblematic of his humility and cordiality.

"Everyone would recognize that Jack's management style and personality is noticeably different from that of the previous Jewish White House chief of staff," Diament said, a reference to Emanuel's abrasiveness.

An open question is how much harder it will be for Lew to balance family and Shabbat observance in his new role. He stays close to his daughter, Shoshana, who works at the Obama administration's Interior Department, but his wife and married son remain in Riverdale, N.Y., where they are active in the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, in the Bronx borough of the city.

His previous stints—in addition to the OMB post, he was also a deputy secretary of state under Obama—involved managing a 9-5, Monday-to-Friday bureaucracy. Aides say there were occasions that necessitated work on Shabbat—for instance, during negotiations with Congress last year aimed at averting a government shutdown.

Running the White House. however, means dealing with crises that have a bad habit of happening on weekends.

"It's a reflection of this administration's comfort with him and his being Jewish," Foxman said. "This is a job that is 24/7—but if there's respect, it works." ■

# Mystery swirls around Judaic manuscripts discovered in Afghanistan

*By Ben Harris*

NEW YORK (JTA)—It was said to be a finding of groundbreaking scholarly and historic significance, comparable in importance to the 19th-century discovery of the Cairo Geniza and rivaling the Dead Sea Scrolls for sheer drama.

That, at any rate, was the buzz in scholarly circles when reports began surfacing last month that an exceptionally rare collection of ancient Judaic manuscripts—some of them dating back more than a millennia—were discovered in a cave in Samangan province in northeastern Afghanistan.

The manuscripts are of several varieties, both religious and secular, and are drafted in a number of languages, including Judeo-Persian and Judeo-Arabic. Among the documents recovered are fragments of the writings of the Saadia Gaon, a famed Jewish sage born in Egypt in the ninth century, and financial records that may shed light on the little-known medieval Jewish merchant class known as the Raddanites.

But those who have seen the documents, and who are familiar with the shadowy trade in Middle Eastern antiquities, say the fantastic tales of an unsuspecting shepherd happening upon documents of incalculable historic value are not to be believed.

"Generally, you have to be very careful of what a Middle Eastern antiquities dealer tells you," said Lenny Wolfe, himself a Middle Eastern antiquities dealer based in Jerusalem. "You're probably safer not believing it."

What no one disputes is that the documents are authentic and, if they can be made widely available to scholars, can potentially shed light on a period in Jewish history that remains shrouded in mystery.

The documents, which number about 150—far fewer than the thousands in the Cairo Geniza—are generally believed to be about 1,000 years old, though a few are probably older. They include early texts suggesting the community may have been Karaite, a Jewish sect that rejected rabbinic law and flourished in the 10th and 11th centuries. There are also financial documents that may have much to teach about the Jewish merchants who acted as middlemen along the trade routes between East Asia and Europe. The writings of Saadia Gaon include fragments of a biblical commentary and a rebuttal to the claims of a local heretic. Poems also were recovered.

"I think that it's a very important find," said Shaul Shaked, an emeritus professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who saw some of the documents in London several months ago. "This is the first time that we have a large quantity of handwritten documents from that area, from Afghanistan, where we knew vaguely there was some kind of Jewish settlement, a Jewish community, but we had very vague ideas about what their life was like."

Wolfe told JTA that he had the opportunity to purchase a small portion of the documents recently and is holding them in Jerusalem until a national institution can come up with the money to acquire them. He declined to say how much he paid for them, where he got them or how much it would cost to deliver them to a museum.

In all probability, the manuscripts were illegally smuggled out of Afghanistan. The director of the Afghan National Archives told Reuters that the find was not Afghan, but a Culture Ministry adviser conceded that it's not uncommon for local antiquities to be shipped abroad where they fetch much higher prices.

As a result, efforts to determine who now holds the documents, where they are being stored or how they were acquired proved to be inconclusive.

What is clear is that the collection is split between several private dealers, at least one of whom is based in London. Other lots are said to be in the hands of dealers in Dubai and Switzerland. Other than Wolfe's acknowledgement of his holdings, JTA could not confirm claims regarding who has ownership of the documents or how they were acquired.

But that doesn't mean there aren't lots of colorful stories floating around. One story, which several of those involved had heard, involves a Russian-Jewish billionaire who supposedly had expressed interest in purchasing the manuscripts but had pulled out after his attorneys advised that he may run into legal difficulties. No one would divulge his name.

It "adds an element of mystique," Wolfe said. "I personally never spoke to any Russian oligarch. What I've heard is hearsay. I don't trust hearsay."

Menashe Goldelman, a London-based expert in Middle Eastern antiquities who has authored a 23-page report on the documents, told JTA that they emerged on the London market several months ago. Goldelman said he had been enlisted by a dealer to sell the documents on his behalf. At present, Goldelman said he was trying to broker an agreement with the various dealers to bring the collection together. Goldelman estimates their total value at about $5 million.

"They are not things that are stolen from an institution or found in a legal excavation," Goldelman said. "At some point, everything that comes from the ground goes to the black market. The black market, this is the institution that helps to save this material. If something has, let's say, commercial value, it gets saved. If you don't have a commercial value for the manuscript, they go and put it in the fireplace."

Goldelman's involvement may not reassure skittish buyers about their provenance. In 2010, two professors reportedly accused him of trafficking in stolen antiquities and protested his scheduled appearance at a conference in Israel. Goldelman's lawyer denied the accusations and threatened to sue for libel.

None of the experts who have spoken publicly on the matter of the Afghan documents appeared to be too troubled by unanswered questions about their origins, seeming to accept such things as the cost of doing business in ancient artifacts.

"What is important for us is that these fragments and documents don't get buried again in some safe of a collector," said Haggai Ben-Shammai, a professor of Arabic at Hebrew University and the academic director of Israel's National Library. Ben-Shammai said the library was searching for a donor who would acquire the manuscripts on its behalf.

"We don't have the means to acquire them on our own," Ben-Shammai said. "We need some assistance in this." ■


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# Jewish media tries to make its mark

*By Dan Klein*

NEW YORK (JåçTA)—It is a strange irony: Jews have been successful in the television business—but Jewish TV, not so muc It's not for lack of trying. Right now, no fewer than three Jewish-focused national cable channels are trying to carve out a viable niche within the already small niche for Jewish TV. It's a road others have taken in the past, only to reach a dead end.

Jay Sanderson, who served for 21 years as CEO of the Jewish Television Network, knows better than most. "There's been dozens of attempts and dozens of failures," said Sanderson, now the president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. "It's a cycle that's been happening for 30-plus years. People want it to happen."

The current Jewish television channels—The Jewish Channel, Shalom TV and Jewish Life Television—have scored some successes. They all launched in the past five years.

The Jewish Channel garnered national attention twice in the last two months with news broadcasts that ended up metastasizing into international stories. Launched in 2007 as a subscription video on-demand channel, TJC has been touted as "a Jewish film festival in your living room." But it has been the channel's news coverage, which makes up a small fraction of TJC's overall programming and mostly is not original content—that has thrust the channel into the public eye.

A November news report on an Israeli government-sponsored ad campaign urging Israeli expatriates in the United States to return home sparked an uproar in the United States, with many suggesting that the ads were dismissive of American Judaism. The Israeli government ultimately apologized and ended the campaign.

And in December, TJC landed a sit-down interview with Newt Gingrich in which the Republican presidential candidate suggested that the Palestinians are an "invented" people. Gingrich's remarks drew headlines and criticism from GOP rivals, including Mitt Romney.

Steven I. Weiss, the director of original programming and new media at TJC as well as its news anchor, credited the channel's success to "hard work and good luck, and doing the hard work until you get lucky."

While TJC officials describe their channel as a Jewish HBO, Shalom TV—a free on-demand channel launched in 2006—describes itself as a Jewish version of C-SPAN and PBS. Shalom TV features educational programming, including Hebrew lessons, as well as videos of Jewish events, lectures, debates and speeches.

In January, the network began operating as a linear cable channel, with programming throughout the day, according to Mark Golub, Shalom TV's founder and CEO. Golub said that five small cable systems across the country will carry the linear channel initially, while three larger cable systems have committed to picking it up once it is up and running. The programming also will be streamed online.

Jewish Life Television, which launched in 2007, already is operating as a 24/7 linear channel. It airs a variety of programming, from music videos and cooking shows to religious services and entertainment news. JLTV appears on cable systems across the country, and recently joined DIRECTV to be broadcast in all 50 states. In December, JLTV broadcast and streamed online President Obama's speech at the Union for Reform Judaism's biennial conference.

Officials at all three channels say there are distinct challenges in creating a television network aimed at a broader American Jewish audience. "If you're reaching Russian, Chinese audiences, you can rely on language barrier to make people have to watch your material," TJC's Weiss said. "With the Jewish audience, everyone speaks English."

Golub said it was an uphill fight to sell cable companies on Shalom TV and the concept of a Jewish channel. "No one had ever been able to convince a major cable system to launch a Jewish network. There was every kind of ethnic, Haitian, Russian, Spanish television. There was Christian, but no Jewish," Golub said. "No cable system would say that we're going to devote server space to feature a Jewish channel in its own lineup of channels alongside MSNBC, the Cooking Channel. We convinced them." In addition to Shalom TV, Golub is president of the Russian Media Group, which produces two of its own Russian-language channels and also distributes a package of satellite channels aimed at Russian speakers. Golub is a co-creator of the company's flagship Russian Television Network of America, a 20-year-old cable and satellite channel that targets immigrants from the former Soviet Union, most of whom are Jewish.

Representatives of all three English-language channels cast their projects not as luxuries but as necessities in the Jewish community.

"If the Jewish culture was not a rich culture, you could say there's no place for Jewish television," Weiss said. "But in a community that produces as many cultural pieces as we produce, as much fascinating political news discussion and as much fascination with Israel—that culture needs a TV channel, it wants a TV channel and it deserves one." Weiss told JTA that TJC has 50,000 subscribers who pay $5 to $7 a month. He said the channel expects to begin turning a profit sometime this year.

Phil Blazer, the founder of JLTV, says his channel's audience has grown on DIRECTV to nearly 2 million households monthly. Based on that figure, he estimates that an additional 1 million viewers are watching on other cable affiliates. Blazer attributed the relatively large viewership to the channel's appeal to Christian audiences interested in Judaism and Jewish culture.

Shalom TV says that its on-demand programming is accessed by 40,000 to 50,000 households monthly. Shalom TV says it tracks audience using the media organization RenTrak; JLTV uses Kantar Media. TJC declined to say how it tracks its numbers. None of the channels provided original tracking documents, and JTA was unable to independently verify their viewership claims.

Blazer says that JLTV, which is a for-profit company, generated $2 million in gross advertising revenue in 2010. He also is the president of the Jewish Life Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supplies some of JLTV's original content. According to IRS filings, Blazer draws no pay from the foundation. Blazer told JTA that he also does not receive a salary from the channel itself.

Golub, Shalom TV's CEO, also does not receive a salary, according to the channel's IRS filings. The channel, Golub added, is a nonprofit that has been funded by him and his brother to the tune of "seven figures" over the past four years. Shalom TV raises additional funds through outside donations and by selling DVDs of its programming. Golub said he is starting to seek additional funding.

"We wanted to prove that a Jewish television network was viable and could have an impact before we talked to the foundations about funding," Golub said. Sanderson, however, was less optimistic. "I'm sure some of the programming has redeeming value," he said. "The question is—is it worth the cost and will it succeed and will it make an impact and will it penetrate the Jewish American community in ways that are successful? I think history doesn't lie in this particular world." ■

# Israel again going to the Oscars gate with a Joseph Cedar entry

*By Tom Tugend*

LOS ANGELES (JTA)—Joseph Cedar is on a pretty good run: The Israeli director has made four movies in his 11-year career, and the first three have represented his country at the Academy Awards for best foreign-language film.

One made the cut of five finalists, but a Cedar film has yet to capture a golden statuette. In fact, no Israeli film has ever won an Oscar.

Cedar and many of his countrymen are hoping that his fourth entry, *Footnote,* will prove to be the charm when nominations for the 84th Academy Awards are announced on January 24.

Sixty-three countries, from Albania to Vietnam, are vying in the foreign-language film category, and there are no guarantees about which will make the cut.

Last year was the first in memory that no domestic or foreign film dealing with the Holocaust or the Nazi era was entered in any Oscars category. On that basis, I predicted that the *Schindler's List* and *Inglourious Basterds* era had passed and that the historical genre would deal with more recent conflicts and genocides.

It took only a year to prove the prophecy wrong with Poland's entry this year, *In Darkness.* The movie's settings and emotions are as lightless as the underground sewers of Lvov, where a dozen Jewish men, women and children hid for 14 months during the German occupation of Poland. Their unlikely protector was a rough-hewn Polish sewage worker and part-time thief who knew all the hiding places in the underground system—it's where he worked and stashed his loot.

At the helm of *In Darkness* is the superb Polish director Agnieszka Holland (*Europa, Europa*), whose forte is to delineate the shades of the human character. As in her other works, the strengths and weakness of the victims, heroes, villains and bystanders vary with time and circumstance.

"I have always been intrigued by the contradictions and extremes in human nature," she said in a phone interview. "I wonder at how fragile and how strong we are, how evil and irrational under some conditions, and how brave and compassionate at other times."

With *Footnote,* Cedar centers on the rivalry between two Talmudic scholars who also are father and son. It's a sharp contrast from the New York native's previous film, *Beaufort*, a war film with an anti-war message.

"What could be more boring?" I can hear a younger audience moan about *Footnote.* But in the hands of Cedar, 43, the film has more tension per frame than a gun-toting action picture or apocalyptic sci-fi epic.

Both Eliezer and Uriel Shkolnik, father and son, are shining lights in the Department of Talmudic Studies of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where rivalries are fierce. To the two Shkolnik philologists, the stakes in their lifelong studies of the authenticity and meaning of each word in different Talmudic versions and editions are far higher than the struggles of warring countries or the rise and fall of national economies.

The director, himself the son of renowned Hebrew University biochemist Howard Cedar, firmly rejects the assumption that the protagonists resemble his family or their relationships.

"The film's Talmudists in no way represent my father and myself," said the younger Cedar, who as an Orthodox Jew is a rarity among Tel Aviv filmmakers. "Actually, their relationship is my nightmare, not my reality."

Yet *Footnote* explores the balance between uncompromising honesty and family relationships.

"What if my son becomes a more successful director than I am, but makes movies that I hate?" asks Cedar, who explored the gulf between observant and secular Israelis in his first two films, *In Time of Favor* and *Campfire.* "Will I tell him how I really feel or preserve family harmony?"

On a national scale, the insistence on one's absolute truth contributes to civic violence in Israel, Cedar believes. "We now have a generation that considers 'compromise' a bad word, and social harmony has been taken hostage by people who claim to know the absolute truth," he said.

Although *Footnote* has not yet been released in American theaters, it has received favorable reviews. At the Cannes Film Festival, *Footnote* was awarded the top prize for best screenplay, and in the United States the National Board of Reviews of Motion Pictures placed the film among the five top foreign-language features.

But the Oscar competition in the foreign-language category is rough and the Academy Awards selection committee is widely considered unpredictable, if not erratic.

The Netherlands' entry, *Sonny Boy,* tells the actual story of two unlikely rescuers, a middle-aged Dutch housewife who runs off with and marries a black Surinamese student more than 20 years her junior. Under the German occupation they hide several Jews in their home. Similar to Anne Frank's fate, the couple is betrayed and arrested, and they die in captivity.

One trend among foreign film producers is the growing emphasis on such themes as internal conflicts, problems of immigrants and life under the former Soviet occupation of Eastern European countries. Examples are films from Bosnia and Ireland (ethnic cleansing), Colombia (guerrillas vs. the military), the Czech Republic (expulsion of ethnic Germans after World War II), Estonia (Soviet army deserter returns), Kazakhstan (Soviets invade Afghanistan), Italy and Romania (illegal immigrants) and Lebanon (Christian-Muslim conflict).

While many colonials this side of the Atlantic consider the King's English as a foreign language, this year the United Kingdom actually submitted an entry in the foreign-language category. The film *Patagonia* is set in a Welsh settlement in southern Argentina, and the characters speak Welsh and Spanish.

In both the United States and Europe, the critical favorite is the Iranian entry, *A Separation*, which has won a string of awards at international film festivals.

The film by Asghar Farhadi masterfully combines an easily recognizable situation—an impending divorce in an upper-middle-class family—with the strange atmosphere, pieties and judicial proceedings of an unfamiliar society.

The Oscars will be presented February 26. ■

# Wendy Wasserstein at center stage in new biography

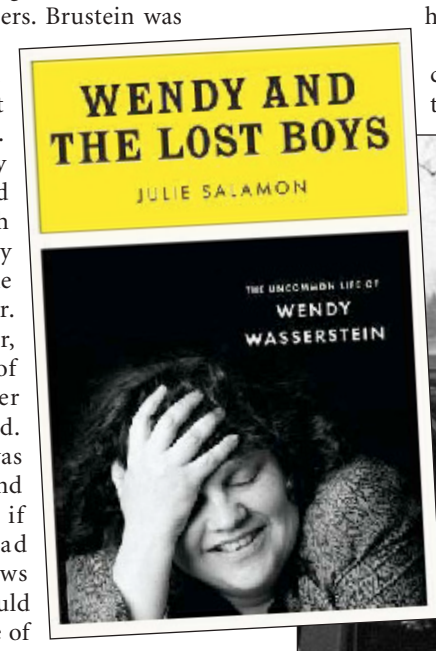
*Rochel Urist, staff writer*

Wendy Wasserstein, who died of cancer at age 55, was the first female playwright to win a Tony Award. She won it for *The Heidi Chronicles* in 1989. The play earned her the Pulitzer Prize that same year. She was 39. Today she is the subject of Julie Salamon's elegant page-turner, *Wendy and the Lost Boys: the uncommon life of Wendy Wasserstein.*

Julie Salamon captures Wasserstein in all her bubbly, clever, neurotic, smiling, ambitious, conflicted, witty, and determined complexity. The youngest of five children, Wasserstein looked to family for comfort and closeness, though she never satisfied her mother's wish that she slim down, marry, and have children. When she won the Pulitzer, her mother, Lola, gushed to friends and family: "Wendy won the Nobel Prize!" adding, "I'd be just as happy if she brought home a husband." Nine years later, at age 48, Wasserstein gave birth to a daughter, Lucy, having kept her pregnancy secret from her mother and almost everyone else. The child's paternity remains a mystery.

Salamon herself grew up amid family secrets. At age 10, for instance, she learned from cousins that her father had been married before, and that his wife and daughter were killed in Auschwitz. Salamon has spent her career uncovering secrets, and the secrets she exposes in this book have surprised even people who knew Wasserstein well. Many reported to Salamon that they never saw beneath Wasserstein's sunny façade. They were aware of her wit, moxie, drive and devotion to family. They knew her warmth and immediacy, her ability to make them laugh, especially when she recapitulated conversations almost verbatim. But they were unaware of her deep-rooted sense of insecurity, of the store of zealously guarded family secrets, and of her relentless but futile drive to please her mother. Salamon allows her subject's life to unfold without preamble or speculation, and she holds us in thrall as we watch Wendy and her siblings morph inexorably into variants of their feared, formidable, and secretive mother. But this mother managed to raise four ferociously accomplished children.

Wasserstein studied playwriting at Yale School of Drama during Robert Brustein's tenure as dean. She was in the company of theatre luminaries, including playwright Christopher Durang, actors Meryl Streep and Sigourney Weaver, and playwright-composer William Finn (Falsettos). She later became close with André Bishop (founder-director of Playwrights Horizons) and Frank Rich, among others. Brustein was no fan of Wasserstein's work. He dismissed it as soap-opera. But he graciously acknowledged her success with a congratulatory telegram when she won the Pulitzer. Sixteen years later, when she died of cancer, even her detractors gasped. Few knew she was ill. An ex-boyfriend remarked that if Wasserstein had known that news of her death would hit the front page of the New York Times, she'd have stayed alive!




The "lost boys" of Salamon's title refer to the many young men of Wasserstein's life, including an institutionalized brother who was discovered in middle age by his astounded siblings. "Lost boys" also includes Wendy's mother's first husband, who died prematurely, after fathering Lola's first two children. For most of her life, Wendy thought her eldest sister was born of the same father, and she knew nothing of the unseen brother. "Lost boys" also refers to the legion of gay men who were Wasserstein's bosom buddies. She referred to many of them as "my husbands." One published a book called *Diary of a Lost Boy*. Others referred to Wendy as the one who will not grow up; who tells stories to her lost boys.

Salamon writes of Wasserstein's uncanny gift of recall for dialogue, which allowed her to mimic the tropes of her generation and become an object of worship to many. But she ruffled many feathers. In her first big success, *Uncommon Women and Others*, she reproduced late-night conversations from her undergraduate days at Mt. Holyoke. Her pitch-perfect memory made for credible dialogue, but her friends felt betrayed. A few shut their doors against her. An earlier play prompted the termination of Wasserstein's brother's marriage after her sister-in-law saw herself aped on stage.

One might argue that such collateral damage is irrelevant to discussion of her work. Writers, after all, have long mined their lives for material. Many modern classics—plays of Tennessee Williams, Lillian Hellman, Eugene O'Neill and Athol Fugard—spring to mind. The problem is that in the eyes of many critics, mine included, Wasserstein's plays are deeply flawed. Her plays lack structural integrity. Her characters lack depth. They are overly reliant on the playwright's gift for gab—or gags—that she produced in abundance. A brilliant friend of mine was one of Wasserstein's chums at Yale. He once said of her: "There's no one funnier as a dinner companion, but she can't write a play to save her soul." His corroboration of my own harsh assessment of her work felt vindicating. But his friendship with her kindled the curiosity I have long felt about the person behind these plays. Though I never much cared for her plays, I found the person intriguing, and I thank Julie Salamon for placing her center stage.

**Wendy Wasserstein with her daughter, Lucy Jane, in 1999**

Salamon is a consummate journalist, an exhaustive researcher, and a prolific writer. She is often described as a novelist in a journalist's garb. Her oeuvre includes *Rambam's Ladder*, a meditation on the practice and necessity of *tzedakah* (charitable giving); *Hospital*, which follows the trials and tribulations of a young medical resident, a Nebraska native, as he moves from big sky country into the polyglot chaos of Maimonides Hospital, which boasts myriad translators for the 70 languages spoken by the patient population. Excerpts of *Hospital* first appeared in *The New Yorker*. Salamon has also written for *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Vanity Fair, Vogue,* and *The New Republic.* She wears her learning lightly, a fact underscored by the absence of any mention, in any of her book jacket bios, that she holds a law degree from NYU.

Julie Salamon's work is always rewarding. And note: you don't have to know theatre to love this book. ■

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# Music and Midrash

*by Sandor Slomovits*

My interview subject this month is someone who needs no introduction to the Ann Arbor area Jewish community. Rabbi Robert Dobrusin has been the spiritual leader of Beth Israel Congregation since 1988. In the past couple of years I've been fortunate enough to read rough drafts of a book he's working on of his life stories and sermons. I was particularly intrigued by one of the chapters in that book, in which Rabbi Dobrusin writes about music. That chapter inspired the following discussion.

**WJN:** I've known from discussions we've had, that you really enjoy music, that it's a frequent companion in your day-to-day life. In your book, in the chapter about music, you tell a funny story about singing along with the CD player in your car.

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** I don't know if it's common for a lot of people or if it's just me, but I'll find one particular style, or one performer that I'll just listen to constantly for a month or a little bit longer, and then I still like them, but I move on to something else. A few years ago, for whatever reason, I started listening to music by Queen. I'm always twenty years too late with these things. (Laughter) I was driving to a funeral in Detroit and I had my dark coat on and my dark hat and I was completely lost in one of the songs. I was singing along and, I'm sure, banging on the steering wheel. It must have been quite a sight, especially for the people in the car that pulled up beside me. It's lucky that those people weren't heading to that same funeral, (Laughter) because that would have been really embarrassing. The idea of telling a humorous story, if it's appropriate, from the bima, during a funeral, that I have no problem with. It's just driving there, aren't I supposed to be gearing myself up for something, and here I am….

**WJN:** Do you remember the song?

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** It might have been "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," but I don't remember. I just remember being so totally embarrassed. (Laughter) And then I let that embarrassment go by because I figured this is what music is, this is what music does.

**WJN:** You write about hearing the Harry Belafonte song, "Jamaica Farewell," as a child, and then your experience of hearing Jimmy Buffet's version years later.

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** My parents loved music, especially my father, but they didn't listen to much music at home. My father played the piano by ear and sang a little off key, but he loved it. If there was somebody on TV, a singer or classical music, we'd listen, but they didn't actually sit down at the record player. But I have this memory that my mother had a kind of a scratchy 45-RPM version of Harry Belafonte singing "Jamaica Farewell." And for some reason, either because she played it over and over or she played it one time and it stuck in my mind, I just associate that song with a very quiet time of my youth. I associate it with summer vacations at a beach cottage that we had, and in later years when I would hear that recording it always brought back extraordinary memories to me. So, when I was in my Jimmy Buffet phase a while ago, I had this live concert CD of his and I was listening to it for the first time. I hadn't looked at the index, and sure enough, he plays a version of "Jamaica Farewell." In that concert version that I was listening to, he said something like "This is for Harry Belafonte. I hope you like what we've done to your song." And I realized that there was a tremendously powerful statement in that about midrash, how we read text. There is a text that exists and then somebody else gets a hold of it, and reads it, interprets it, covers it so to speak, to use a musical term, in a completely different way. And it doesn't matter whether Harry Belafonte liked it or not because it's there, standing on its own. That's how it stands now, and there will always be people who will love that version and people who will despise it, some who will consider it a great improvement or a terrible step back. And I really got to thinking about the power that it has when any rabbi, or any person who stands up to give *a d'var Torah*, or anybody who stands up to interpret a text, really is covering it in their own way. If we have a connection with the original text, as I did with the song, we find ourselves either tremendously drawn to that new version, because it's perpetuated the old version—and that's really good—or we find it to be repulsive because it's taken something that's sanctified in a way, and undermined it. By the way, I like his version very much, but it doesn't bring back the memories that Harry Belafonte's does.

**Rabbi Robert Dobrusin**

**WJN:** Being who you are, you view the world to a certain extent through the lens of being a religious Jew, a rabbi, and so when you hear any song lyric, it's filtered through those lens, but it's interesting to me that you would think of midrash when you hear a new cover of an old song.

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** I think that I first learned about midrash, although I didn't know it at the time, by listening to Allan Sherman, who by the way, I think was an absolute genius in the way he used language and in the way he was able to use his voice. Clearly he did not have that good a voice at all, but still it was captivating. Unlike Jimmy Buffett, Allan Sherman takes a text and completely changes that text. But you still remember the original, and it's only because you know the original that it works. So similarly with midrash. We have a tradition called *aggadah*, in which people just tell stories about texts. So, for example, Abraham's father is known in the Jewish tradition as selling idols. There's nothing in the Torah that indicates that. So, it's a nice story, but it has no connection with anything in the Torah. If you can find a hook in the language of the Torah and write a midrash which fills in the gaps in the story, that midrash takes on much more power, because it has a connection with the text. So when I hear Allan Sherman singing the line from the song that's a takeoff on "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and he sings of "trampling through the warehouse where the drapes of Roth were stored" that only is funny if you know the original. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" doesn't have a problem being well–known, but there are plenty of other songs that Sherman gave new life to because people heard his versions and maybe they went back to the original. The first one that everybody thinks of when they think of Allan Sherman is "Hello Muddah, Hello Fuddah," which, as I only later found out, was actually a piece of classical music called the Dance of the Hours by the 19th century composer, Ponchielli. Maybe you could get away with it now because time has passed, but certainly 20, 30 years ago, no serious orchestra was going to play that piece of music because they knew that half the audience would start singing, "Hello Muddah, Hello Fuddah." And yet, at the same time, that's given that music life. That's kept that music going. And that's similar to some of what midrash does. It does keep stories alive. By interpreting them in a contemporary way we keep them alive as well.

**WJN:** You write about referring to song lyrics in your sermons. In fact you devoted a whole sermon to Allan Sherman. Have any of your members ever said to you, "Rabbi, could you stay a little farther from contemporary music, please?"

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** Well, I'm sure somebody has said that. First of all, one of the things that I always preface with is that when I'm talking about contemporary music, I'm talking about music from the 1960s, 70s and maybe the early 80s. That's contemporary music to me. I mean I know some contemporary songs, but very rarely would I use something that I didn't grow up with, or didn't feel a really strong connection with. And also, I don't do it [refer to song lyrics in sermons] so often that I'm hoping people don't get tired of it.

But I have been astounded by the power that music has, and the power that it has to touch a place in people…I'll give you an example. I once gave a sermon in which I wanted to quote a line from the song "The Boxer" by Paul Simon, but I wanted to quote a line that was not in the regular version of the song, but in the version that Simon and Garfunkel sang in their concert in Central Park in 1981. (That I could have gone to because I was in Rabbinical school in New York at the time, but I didn't, and I don't know why, one of the bad choices I made in my life.)

In any event, there was a verse to that song that they added in that concert, and one of the lines was, "After changes upon changes we are more or less the same." I wanted to use that line, and as I started to think about the sermon, which was a High Holiday sermon, I found the opportunity to teach something, to teach the concept of a niggun, a wordless melody used in prayer. I started to ask myself, are there any niggunim that come out of contemporary music—again using my understanding of contemporary music—that people would immediately recognize and would sing along with? I started the sermon by saying, after talking a little about what a niggun was, that there is "a beautiful and haunting niggun [in a contemporary song] that is repeated over and over at the end, becoming almost hypnotic. If you know it, and I hope you do, please feel free to join with me." And I sang the "lie la lie" from "The Boxer," and I'll tell you that three quarter of the congregation was singing along. I was stunned. I thought three or four people would join me. It got me to be able to start, and it got people connected with what I was about to do. And of course we know the power of religious music, we know the power from Hassidic niggunim, but I think this enabled people who aren't tied into that to connect to that idea of what music can do.

I'm careful how many times I do this, but sometimes… I remember I gave a sermon on a very, very serious theological issue and felt that, while it was very accessible to people, I wanted to ground it in something that people could walk away with. I used the tag line, "Two Out of Three Ain't Bad" by Jim Steinman, made famous by Meat Loaf, which is just an incredible song, I think, and used it to relate to this teaching that I was doing. And again, it really resonated with people. It gets people listening who may not otherwise listen, and it gives people that cue to be able to remember, and finally, it urges people to listen for the serious midrashic messages in songs. The person who wrote "Two Out of Three Ain't Bad" did not have anything theological in mind, I'm quite sure, and I wouldn't claim it has a hidden message. I'm bringing the message; I'm reading into the song.

We all do this, of course. We listen with our ears. I'm listening with different ears than the artist did. That meant something to the artist who created the song, while for us it may mean something that relates to our lives. And I think the same is true when we read the prayer book in Jewish tradition. People will say to me, "I can't accept what these words mean." And I say, "Well, you've got a few choices. One is you don't say them. Two is you say them even though you don't

believe in them." Neither of which I would endorse, but I would endorse looking at the text and asking, "What is this saying to me?" And even if it's something different than the author intended, once you put it out there, as a prayer, as a poem, or as a song, it's open season for anybody to say, "I'm finding my meaning in this," and then you can say it more comfortably.

There are many cases where there are songs that I hear and I know that the writer didn't mean that but…the best example of that is a song by KENNY, "Watching the River Run." I am quite sure that they were absolutely not talking about *tashlich*, the ceremony done on the banks of a river on Rosh Hashana! (Laughter) But when I hear that song, I cannot hear it without thinking about *tashlich*. Now, they may not have been thinking about that, but clearly the song is about the passage of time, clearly it's about finding places of meaning, and that is the way I look at the world, professionally and personally, that resonates with the Jewish ritual. I can't hear the song without thinking of it. They have their meaning, but I'm interpreting it with mine.

I think it was listening to my all time favorite songwriter, Harry Chapin's music that really gave me the sense of the power of words. He has a line, "A song don't have much meaning when it don't have nothing to say." To me that's what music is supposed to be. And it's not that I can't enjoy a song that doesn't have anything to say, but it's not going to be the one that's going to stick in my mind. It's not going to be the one that will occur to me in the middle of writing a sermon, that this is the piece that I need.

But I have to tell you, I still like music for what it is. Every song doesn't have to be Torah. Sometimes a song is just a song, and that's wonderful too. It's just pure fun. If I hear Jimmy Buffett's "Cheeseburger in Paradise," I am not about to say—although he does mention kosher pickles—I'm not about to say this is some philosophical statement. (Laughter) And I'm not going to turn it into that. I'm just going to like it for what it is, and that's good too.

**WJN:** You write about taking piano lessons as a child and how your teacher said that you could be a fine pianist if you would just stick to the written notes first, rather than immediately improvising. I wonder whether that's something that early on was a personality trait that led you to feel like you wanted and needed to be able to make your own interpretations.

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** I would like to think it was, that it wasn't just laziness. (Laughter) I was never known as one who had to color outside the lines. (Laughter) I do use that as a metaphor for what you're asking, because certainly I had a lot of trouble early on in college, and even a little bit at times later—though of course in Rabbinical school they understood this—because I would often interpret texts that I wasn't supposed to interpret. I was supposed to understand them on the simplest level, on the basic level, and I would give my own twist to them. I was writing my own midrash. Certainly now, a lot of people will say, and they say this to rabbis in general sometimes, "Why can't the text just say what it says? Why do you have to take it and argue with it, or move it in a different direction? Or, why do you come up with this crazy question about the text, when the text says this?" And that's part of what we're trying to do as rabbis. Is it frustrating? It's sometimes frustrating because people just want to see the text the way it is. But I can't just teach the text the way it is. It's there, you can read it, anyone can read it, and anybody can do what a rabbi does. You just have to feel the freedom to do that, to ask the questions, to improvise on it, become Allan Shermans with the text.

**WJN:** You said that in Rabbinical school they understood this.

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** Yes, I think that they were trying to train us to interpret. So they understood if they were asking you to explain something, and you were throwing yourself into the explanation, they might write in the margins, "Why don't you leave this for the class where you learn how to give sermons." So there was an understanding that people were going to do that with the text. My college professors didn't necessarily understand that.

It is a process and it is a process of interpretation. Here's a perfect example. I was listening to the radio about a year ago and I heard that Neil Diamond had produced a new CD in which he took some of his favorite songs, one or two that he'd written, I think, and some that others had written, and he redid them, without any desire to necessarily match the original songs. One of the songs on there is "Midnight Train to Georgia" and he sings it as this slow, sad ballad, where you can really feel the disappointment. Now the original is a beautiful song, there's no question, but it's different.

So, if we have a text in our tradition that for years, for centuries, has been understood as intending to convey a certain emotion, and I, or anybody comes with their experience and points out how it really can be understood in a different way, whatever the text is, it can be understood as positive, rather than negative, as happy rather than sad, as challenging rather than comforting, that's the power of it and we make it what we want.

**WJN:** There are purists in every field. People who say, "If you don't do Shakespeare the way Olivier did it…" Would you agree that while freedom is essential, it's also important that if you're going to "cover" something you need to have a background of knowledge and respect for the original?

**Rabbi Dobrusin:** They're both great points. I want to make a distinction between two things, first of all. One is between practice, and study and learning. There are many people who say, "I'll do a lot of midrash, I'll interpret text, but my observance is what my observance is, and that's something different." People who are very, I wouldn't even say strict, but traditional in their observance, can still engage in this. It's two different aspects of what Judaism is. But my argument would be that no Jew who is serious about Torah study is not doing this midrash business. The point though is that very often there is a difference between those who will only depend upon the midrash that was written two thousand years ago, or eighteen hundred years ago, or maybe today by some very, very learned individual they respect, as opposed to those who are a little more free to continue that process through the years, rather than saying, "I'm going to stick with the midrash that exists in the Talmud." Why do I say that? Because very few traditional Jews can read a story in the Torah, if they are learned, without hearing the traditional midrashim that have been written on it. The story of the exodus, the midrash is in the Hagaddah. Jews have never been fundamentalists, that is the point. We've always engaged in midrash. The question is do we want to write our own or do we want to go by what somebody else said. The problem with writing your own is, what you just said, to be authentic it has to be in some way backed up by a knowledge of and a respect for the process. I would not call somebody who took a text in the Torah and completely held it up for public ridicule, as doing midrash. But, that's an extreme. I think it's tremendous, and very, very powerful, when people have that respect, or at least that curiosity, even if they don't have the knowledge of the traditional background, to look at a text and say, "I see something different in this." I can tell you stories about people in classes of mine who've had no Jewish background whatsoever, who look at a story and see things that none of us ever saw, partly because we've been trained to look in a particular direction. Maybe because we don't have the expertise in the particular area that they do, maybe it's poetry, maybe it's linguistics, maybe they look at a section of the Torah and they know something about agriculture that I don't know…. There's a book on my shelf, from a Christian perspective, called *A Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm.* It's fantastic. You could find somebody who has never looked at this Psalm before, "The Lord is my shepherd," but who grew up being a shepherd, look what they could tell me about this psalm. So they may have no knowledge of it, may have no knowledge of the context of it, but they know shepherding. That's what I think the point is. So I don't think people can get themselves off the hook too quickly by saying, "I don't know anything about…." I think if you come in with the proper attitude you still have so much to share. ■

# February 2012

## Wednesday 1

**Lunch and Learn: BIC.** Bring a dairy lunch. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Noon.

**Hebrew 102: TBE.** 6:30–7:30 p.m.

## Thursday 2

**Prayer, Weekly Torah Reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad.** 9 a.m. at the JCC.

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors.** Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 10 a.m., $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Dombey, a Jewish perspective on this week's news, 11 a.m.; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, Noon; Special events and guest presentations, 1 p.m.; Sidney Warschausky Literary Group facilitated by group members at 2:15 p.m. Call Merrill Poliner at 971-0990 for name of current book.

**Birthdays and Presentation: JCC Seniors:** Birthday celebration for all with February birthdays, with lunch and birthday cake for family and friends at 12:30 p.m. Followed at 1 p.m. with a presentation by John Glenn, who for more than thirty years has shared his expertise about William Shakespeare with a wide range of audiences. This lively and informative talk will set the Bard against a rich description of Elizabethian times.

**Spirituality Book Club: TBE.** Cantor Rose leads a lunchtime session of the book club focusing of *The Jew in the Lotus,* by Rodger Kamanetz. For information, contact cantorannie@gmail.com Noon–1 p.m.

**Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad.** Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Taanit chapter 2. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

## Friday 3

**Lunch with the Torah: TBE.** Rabbi Levy will teach an informal session about the Torah. Bring lunch and join in the lively conversation. Noon–1 p.m.

**Weekly Yiddish Reading Group: JCC Seniors.** Meets at the JCC. 1:30 p.m. Call Ray Juni at 761-2765 for information.

**Shabbat Services for Young Families: TBE.** Tot Shabbat for ages 5 and under, and Tot and Sukkat Shalom at 5:30 p.m. Tot dinner at 6:00 p.m. Shira and Sukkat Shalom Shabbat for ages 5 through 10 at 6:30 p.m. Sisterhood Shabat Service with Kol Halev at 7:30 p.m.

**Italian Nosh Shabbat: EMU Hillel.** Student led Kabbalat Services, or pray without being part of a formal group service. Student prepared dinner. 6 p.m.

**Friday evening services:** *See listing at end of calendar*

## Saturday 4

**Torah Study with Rabbi: TBE.** 8:50–9:30 a.m.

**Sixth Grade Shabbat: BIC.** Shabbat morning program. 9:30 a.m.

**Learner's Service: AARH.** Part 5 of 9 monthly sessions offered by rabbinic intern Aura Ahuvia. Each month, participants explore the historical, geographical and political traditions that are part of the Saturday morning service. This month's theme is *The Amidah*. This session will discuss why this prayer is regarded as the peak of the service and will explore how to work with it in a more meaningful way. For information, phone 445-1910. 10 a.m.–noon at the JCC.

**Havdalah Pajama Party: JCC-Early Childhood Center.** Includes a pizza dinner, a Havdalah service, pillowcase making, storytelling, and an evening snack. $5 per person. For information or to register, contact Noreen DeYoung at noreendeyoung@jccfed.org or phone 971-0990. 6 p.m.

**Mystical Insights to the Torah–for Women: Chabad.** Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah. 1 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad.** Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Shabbat services:** *See listing at end of calendar.*

## Sunday 5

**Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad.** An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

**Tu B'shevat Environmental Programs: JCS.** Several non-profit environmental organizations will share their work and lessons. The Ecology Center will be on hand to test toys for toxicity. Featuring a panel of local experts who will discuss, "Protecting Our Great Lakes Waters: Do Asian Carp Really Make Good Gefilte Fish?" At Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 North Dixboro Road. Metered parking available. For information, contact the JCS at 975-9872 or email info@jewishculturalsociety.org. 10 a.m.–Noon.

**Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad.** Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

**World Wide Wrap: BIC.** 9:30 a.m.

**Super Bowl Party: BIC Men's Club.** 6 p.m.

**Basic Judaism: TBE.** Meets in Room 9/10. 7:45–9 p.m.

**Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad.** Learning the deeper meanings to the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. *Every Sunday.*

## Monday 6

**English as a Second Language Daily Classes: JFS.** Ongoing class from 9 a.m.–noon on Mondays–Fridays and 1–3 p.m. on Mondays–Thursdays at Jewish Family Services, 2245 South State Street. For more information, contact JFS at 769-0209 or email andre@jfsannarbor.org. *Ongoing.*

**"Up Against the Wall–Israel in a Changing Middle East:" UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** Symposium at the UM Michigan League–Koessler Room, 911 North University. For information, see www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/. 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

**Torah Trop: TBE.** With Cantor Rose. Noon.

**"Israeli Spring? The Enduring Jewish Question:" UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** Presented by Roger Cohen of the New York Times. UM Michigan Union–Rogel Ballroom, 550 South State Street. For information, see www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/. 6 p.m.

**Cooking Demonstration: Jewish Women's Circle of Washtenaw County.** Plant-based cooking demonstration by Jan Kemp, M.Sc. and Healthy Eating Specialist. Whole Foods Market Classroom, 3135 Washtenaw Avenue. $10. [Note that the meeting time is earlier than usual.] For information, contact Esther Goldstein at esther@jewmich.com. 7 p.m.

**Women's Torah Study: TBE.** Led by Cantor Annie Rose. 7–8:30 p.m.

## Tuesday 7

**"Money Matters–Jewish Business Ethics:" Jewish Learning Institute.** Course covering Judaism's approach to practical economic dilemmas and monetary quandaries that are both personal and professional. Grounded in 3,000 years of tradition and practical experience, an ancient yet fresh spin on how we view ethics and money will be presented. 9:30–11 a.m. at Chabad House and 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC. *Every Tuesday.*

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors.** Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m., $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, noon; Games and activities including mahjong, quilting for the patients of Mott Hospital, art projects and card games, 1 p.m. Wii sports including bowling, tennis, golf and baseball. No experience necessary. 1 p.m. Open computer time with a tutor available, 1 p.m. Call for reservations and more information. *Every Tuesday.*

**Bible Literature and History Class: JCC Seniors.** First session of Washtenaw Community College class taught by Dr. Lizabeth Fried. This semester's class will cover "Ezra in History and Tradition: Inquiry in to God's Justice." To register, call 971-0990.

**Yidish Tish (Yiddish Conversational Group).** All ages and levels welcome including UM and non-UM participants. 1:30 p.m. at Beanster's Café, ground floor of UM Michigan League. For information, call 936-2367.

**Hebrew 103: TBE.** 6:15–7:15 p.m.

**Women's Tu B'shevat Seder and Dinner: TBE.** In the Social Hall. 6:15 p.m.

**Tu B'shevat Seder: Pardes Hannah.** At Leslie Science Center. 7:30 p.m.

**Tu B'shevat Seder: Chabad.** Jewish Arbor Day Seder with special foods and drinks from Israel, plus a study session on the meaning of the day and the Jewish perspective on ecology. 7:30 p.m.

## Wednesday 8

**Lunch and Learn: BIC.** Bring a dairy lunch. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Noon.

**"Klezmer Time Zones:" UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** Presented by Mark Slobin of Wesleyan University. 202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022. 4 p.m.

**Hebrew 102: TBE.** 6:30–7:30 p.m.

**Men's Torah Study: TBE.** Bi-monthly group open to the community. Led by Roger Stutesman. For information, contact rgstutesman@sbcglobal.net. 7:30–9 p.m.

## Thursday 9

**Prayer, Weekly Torah Reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad.** 9 a.m. at the JCC.

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors.** Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 10 a.m., $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Dombey, a Jewish perspective on this week's news, 11 a.m.; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, Noon; Special events and guest presentations, 1 p.m.; Sidney Warschausky Literary Group led by group members at 2:15 p.m. Call Merrill Poliner at 971-0990 for name of current book.

**"Political Culture of FSU Jews in Germany, Israel and the Ukraine:" UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** Presented by Olena Bagno-Moldavski of Stanford University. 202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022. Noon.

**Medical Check and Tu B'shevat: JCC Seniors.** A nurse from Care Response will monitor blood pressures and address questions at 12:30 p.m., followed at 1 p.m. by Rabbi Lisa Delson of Temple Beth Emeth leading a celebration of Tu B'shevat, the New Year of the Trees.

**Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad.** Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Taanit chapter 2. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

## Friday 10

**Lunch with the Torah: TBE.** Rabbi Levy will teach an informal session about the Torah. Bring lunch and join in the lively conversation. Noon–1 p.m.

**Weekly Yiddish Reading Group: JCC Seniors.** Meets at the JCC. 1:30 p.m. Call Ray Juni at 761-2765 for information.

**Shabbat Services for Young Families: TBE.** Tot Shabbat for ages 5 and under, and Tot and Sukkat Shalom at 5:30 p.m. Tot dinner at 6:00 p.m. Shira and Sukkat Shalom Shabbat for ages 5 through 10 at 6:30 p.m. Shabbat Family Service honoring 2nd Grade with Middle School Shir Chadash (MSSC) at 7:30 p.m.

**Kids' Night Out: JCC.** Featuring crafts and games, a movie and a pizza dinner. The evening will begin with an optional talent show for anyone interested in showing off their singing, dancing, music, magic or other skills. Tonight's film will be *Kung Fu Panda 2.* Open to JCC members and non-members in grades K-5. Kosher dinner options available with advance notice. Registration and payment due by February 9. RSVP to shoshanajackson@jccfed.org or phone 971-0990.

**Friday evening services:** *See listing at end of calendar*

## Saturday 11

**Torah Study with Rabbi: TBE.** 8:50–9:30 a.m.

**Shabbat Limmud: BIC.** With Rabbi Dobrusin. 9 a.m.

**Services: AARH.** Interactive community service features music, singing, modern English readings and thought provoking Torah discussion. Led by rabbinic intern Aura Ahuvia. To get involved, contact aura613@gmail.com or visit www.aarecon.org for more information. 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at the JCC.

**Mini-Minyan: BIC.** For K–2nd graders. 11 a.m.

**Kehillat Shabbat: BIC.** For 3rd–5th graders. 11 a.m.

**Tot Shabbat: BIC.** For preschoolers and their families. 11:15 a.m.

**Mystical Insights to the Torah–for Women: Chabad.** Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah. 1 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad.** Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Shabbat services:** *See listing at end of calendar.*

## Sunday 12

**Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad.** An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. *Every Sunday.*

**Planning Session: BIC Men's Club.** 9:30 a.m.

**Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad.** Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. *Every Sunday.*

**Discussion: BIC Men's Club.** Discussion on "Reforestation in Israel," led by Hannah Lis of JNF. 5:30 p.m.

**Jewish Parenting Workshop: TBE.** "The Blessing of a B Minus – Using Jewish Wisdom to Raise Resilient Teens," facilitated by Jerry Miller, PhD and Terri Ginsburg. 6–7:30 p.m.

**Basic Judaism: TBE.** Held in Room 9/10 from 7:45–9 p.m.

**Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad.** Learn the deeper meanings of the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. *Every Sunday.*

## Monday 13

**English as a Second Language Daily Classes: JFS.** Ongoing class from 9 a.m.–noon on Mondays–

Fridays and 1–3 p.m. on Mondays–Thursdays at Jewish Family Services, 2245 South State Street. For more information, contact JFS at 769-0209 or email andre@jfsannarbor.org. *Ongoing.*

**Torah Trop: TBE.** Weekly group with with Cantor Rose. Noon.

## Tuesday 14

**"Money Matters–Jewish Business Ethics:" Jewish Learning Institute.** 9:30–11 a.m. at Chabad House and 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC. *Every Tuesday. See February 7.*

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors**. Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m., $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, noon; Games and activities including mahjong, quilting for the patients of Mott Hospital, art projects and card games. 1 p.m. Wii sports including bowling, tennis, golf and baseball. Open computer time with a tutor available, 1 p.m. No experience necessary. 1 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

**Bible Literature and History Class: JCC Seniors**. 10 a.m. *See February 7.*

**Yidish Tish (Yiddish Conversational Group).** All ages and levels welcome including UM and non-UM participants. 1:30 p.m. at Beanster's Café, ground floor of UM Michigan League. For information, call 936-2367.

**Film and Discussion: UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** "Mogulesco: A Tale of the Yiddish Theater," led by Mark Slobin of Wesleyan University. 202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022. 4 p.m.

**Hebrew 103: TBE.** 6:15–7:15 p.m.

**Movie Night With Miriam: EMU Hillel.** Double feature night. This month's theme is "Quirky Classic RomsComs!" Popcorn and soda provided. Potluck items welcome. 7 p.m.

**Spirituality Book Club: TBE**. Cantor Rose leads an evening session of the book club focusing of *The Jew in the Lotus,* by Rodger Kamanetz. For information, contact cantorannie@gmail.com. 7:30–8:30 p.m.

**Weekly Torah Portion—for Women: Chabad**. Reading the Bible may be easy, but understanding it is no simple matter. Study the text in the original, together with the classical commentaries. 8:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

## Wednesday 15

**Lunch and Learn: BIC.** Bring a dairy lunch. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Noon.

**Movie Wednesday: TBE**. Film followed by optional discussion. In Adult Lounge from 1–3 p.m.

**Presentation: UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** Michal Kravel-Tovi, Mandell L. Berman Postdoctoral Research Felllow in Contemporary American Jewish Life, presents "An Accounting of the Soul: The Organized American-Jewish Community, Social Science, and the Language of 'Continuity.' 202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022. 4 p.m.

**Hebrew 102: TBE.** 6:30–7:30 p.m.

## Thursday 16

**Prayer, Weekly Torah Reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad.** 9 a.m. at the JCC.

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors.** Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 10 a.m., $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Dombey, a Jewish perspective on this week's news, 11 a.m.; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, Noon; Special events and guest presentations, 1 p.m.; Sidney Warschausky Literary Group led by grup members at 2:15 p.m. Call Merrill Poliner at 971-0990 for name of current book.

**Presentation: UM Frankel Center for Judaic Studies.** Michael Schlie of Indiana University presents, "The Politics of Evil: Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss, and the Last Man." 202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022. Noon.

**Song Performance: JCC Seniors**. Caroline Helton, opera singer and professor of voice at the UM School of Music, will perform songs ranging from opera to jazz to Broadway standards. 1 p.m.

**Thirsty Third Thursday: BIC**. BIC Men's Club. 7:30 p.m.

**Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad**. Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Taanit chapter 2. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

## Friday 17

**Lunch with the Torah: TBE.** Rabbi Levy will teach an informal session about the Torah. Bring lunch and join in the lively conversation. Noon–1 p.m.

**Weekly Yiddish Reading Group: JCC Seniors**. Meets at the JCC. Call Ray Juni at 761-2765 for information. 1:30 p.m.

**Avi Schaefer Shabbat: EMU Hillel.** Join nationwide initiative dedicated to IDF veteran Avi Schaefer, who was killed by a drunk driver in 2010. As a freshman at Brown University, Schaefer made a huge impact on the push to have a respectful dialogue about peace. Students from the Muslim community are especially invited to join in the evening's activities, as participants discuss how to continue meaningful dialogue at EMU. Student volunteers are asked to come early to help prepare a Kosher/Hallal Mediterranean feast. 6 p.m.

**Shabbat Services for Young Families: TBE.** Tot Shabbat for ages 5 and under, and Tot and Sukkat Shalom at 5:30 p.m. Tot dinner at 6:00 p.m. Shira and Sukkat Shalom Shabbat for ages 5 through 10 at 6:30 p.m. Shabbat Anniversary and Birthdays Celebration Service at 7:30 p.m.

**Services and Presentation: BIC.** Friday Night Service followed by presentation by Dr. Arnold Monto on "LaBruit: Judaism and Health." 7:30 p.m.

**Friday evening services**: *See listing at end of calendar*

## Saturday 18

**Torah Study with Rabbi: TBE.** 8:50–9:30 a.m.

**Shabbat Services: Pardes Hannah**. Beth Israel Annex. 10 a.m.

**Mystical Insights to the Torah–for Women: Chabad**. Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah. 1 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad**. Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Shabbat services**: *See listing at end of calendar.*

## Sunday 19

**Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad**. An in-depth study into the prayer book, plus an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. *Every Sunday.*

**Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad**. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. *Every Sunday.*

**Jewish Play Reading Group: JCC.** First of a series of four workshops led by Kate Mendelof, UM Residential College drama professor and director of Ann Arbor's annual "Shakespeare in the Arb," now in its 11th year. Series fee is $70 for JCC members and $85 for non-members. *7–9 p.m. Also February 26, March 4 and March 11.*

**Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad**. Learn the deeper meanings of the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. *Every Sunday*.

## Monday 20

**February Break Fun Days: JCC Youth**. During Hebrew Day School and Ann Arbor Public School breaks, the JCC Youth Department offers full day programs featuring field trips or special activities. For JCC members in grades K-5. $38/day ($34/additional siblings); Aftercare is an additional $10. Middle school students may participate at a reduced fee. ($20 per day.) 8 a.m.–4 p.m. Afternoon care is available from 4–6 p.m. For information or to register, contact Shoshana Jackson at shoshanajackson@jccfed.org or phone 971-0990. *Through February 24.*

**English as a Second Language Daily Classes: JFS**. Ongoing class from 9 a.m.–noon on Mondays–Fridays and 1–3 p.m. on Mondays–Thursdays at Jewish Family Services, 2245 South State Street. For more information, contact JFS at 769-0209 or email andre@jfsannarbor.org. *Ongoing.*

## Tuesday 21

**"Money Matters–Jewish Business Ethics:" Jewish Learning Institute**. 9:30–11 a.m. at Chabad House and 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC. *Every Tuesday. See February 7.*

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors.** Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m., $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, noon; Games and activities including mahjong, quilting for the patients of Mott Hospital, art projects and card games. 1 p.m. Wii sports including bowling, tennis, golf and baseball. No experience necessary. 1 p.m. Open computer time with a tutor available, 1 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

**Bible Literature and History Class: JCC Seniors**. 10 a.m. *See February 7.*

**Yidish Tish (Yiddish Conversational Group).** All ages and levels welcome including UM and non-UM participants. 1:30 p.m. at Beanster's Café, ground floor of UM Michigan League. For information, call 936-2367.

**Hebrew 103: TBE.** 6:15–7:15 p.m.

**Celebrity Cooking Class: JCC.** First of four monthly classes featuring a different prominent Jewish chef/cook who will lead a class in preparing specific dishes. This month's celebrity is Lori Shepard of Simply Scrumptious Catering. $25/session. RSVP to Sharon Freedland at karenfreedland@jccfed.org or phone 971-0990. 7 p.m.

**Weekly Torah Portion—for Women: Chabad**. Reading the Bible may be easy, but understanding it is no simple matter. Study the text in the original, together with the classical commentaries. 8:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

## Wednesday 22

**Lunch and Learn: BIC**. Bring a dairy lunch. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Noon.

**Hebrew 102: TBE**. 6:30–7:30 p.m.

**Men's Torah Study: TBE.** Bi-monthly group open to the community. Led by Roger Stutesman. For information, contact rgstutesman@sbcglobal.net. 7:30–9 p.m.

## Thursday 23

**Prayer, Weekly Torah Reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad**. 9 a.m. at the JCC.

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors**. Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 10 a.m., $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Dombey, a Jewish perspective on this week's news, 11 a.m.; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, noon; Special events and guest presentations, 1 p.m.; Sidney Warschausky Literary Group led by group members at 2:15 p.m. Call Merrill Poliner at 971-0990 for name of current book.

**Senior Lifestyle and Injury Prevention: JCC Seniors.** Joyce Kessler, Injury Prevention Coordinator at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, will conduct the second of a series of four sessions. This month's session will concentrate on Fall Prevention. 1 p.m.

**Rolling with Hillel: EMU Hillel.** Monthy Bowling Night. $5 for shoe rental, two games, pizza, pop, and a chance to win Abraham, the bowling mascot. 7 p.m.

**Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad**. Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Taanit chapter 2. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

## Friday 24

**Lunch with the Torah: TBE.** Rabbi Levy will teach an informal session about the Torah. Bring lunch and join in the lively conversation. Noon–1 p.m.

**Weekly Yiddish Reading Group: JCC Seniors**. Meets at the JCC. Call Ray Juni at 761-2765 for information. 1:30 p.m.

**Shabbat Services for Young Families: TBE.** Tot Shabbat for ages 5 and under, and Tot and Sukkat Shalom at 5:30 p.m. Tot dinner at 6:00 p.m. Shira and Sukkat Shalom Shabbat for ages 5 through 10 at 6:30 p.m. Pulpit Switch with St. Clare's Episcopal Church at 7:30 p.m.

**Musical Kabbalat Shabbat Services: AARH.** Led by rabbinic intern Aura Ahuvia. Services followed by vegetarian potluck dinner. Pizza nosh for children before services at 6 p.m. and childcare provided during services from 6:15–7:30 p.m. Reservations preferred, especially for pizza and childcare. Contact Jennifer Cohen at 445-1910 or email via website at www.aarecon.org/contact-us. 6–10 p.m. at the JCC.

**Friday evening services**: *See listing at end of calendar*

### *Saturday 25*

**Torah Study with Rabbi: TBE**. 8:50–9:30 a.m.

**Shabbat Limmud: BIC.** With Rabbi Dobrusin. 9 a.m.

**Tot Shabbat: BIC.** For preschoolers and their families. 11:15 a.m.

**Mystical Insights to the Torah–for Women: Chabad**. Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah. 1 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad**. Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown. *Every Saturday.*

**Shabbat services**: *See listing at end of calendar.*

## Sunday 26

**Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad**. An in-depth study into the prayer book, plus an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. *Every Sunday.*

**Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad.** Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. *Every Sunday.*

**Jewish Play Reading Group: JCC**. 7–9 p.m. *See February 19.*

**Basic Judaism: TBE.** Meets in Room 9/10. 7:45–9 p.m.

**Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad**. Learn the deeper meanings of the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. *Every Sunday*.

## Monday 27

**English as a Second Language Daily Classes: JFS**. Ongoing class from 9 a.m.–noon on Mondays–Fridays and 1–3 p.m. on Mondays–Thursdays

# The Jewish Cultural Society

Invites You to Attend

# TU B'SHEVAT

MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS

*JCS Tu B'shevat focuses on the historical, cultural, and ecological elements of the Jewish holiday known as the "birthday of the trees" and includes activities and programming for both children and adults.*

## celebrate tu b'shevat

in the lush, green environment of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens

FEBRUARY 5, 2012

10am-Noon

### ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES!

- A scavenger hunt in the conservatory to learn about plants with ancient historical significance
- An interactive non-profit fair with local experts on the environment and local foods
- Demonstrations, activities, and crafts
- A presentation on the state of the Huron River and the Great Lakes*
- A special Tu B'Shevat seder sampling nuts and fruits from trees to symbolize the Earth's gifts and environmental awareness.

***"Protecting Our Great Lakes Waters: Do Asian Carp Really Make Good Gefilte Fish?"***

1800 N. Dixboro Rd., Ann Arbor

**ADMISSION IS FREE.**
Parking fee at MBG is $1.20/hr.

Questions?
info@jewishculturalsociety.org
734.975.9872

# Don't Miss this *Important* Spring Event.

## You Are Invited...

## JFS @ UMS

**March 25, 2012**
**Rackham Auditorium**
**Reception: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**
**San Francisco Symphony Mavericks Chamber Concert: 4 p.m.**

## Honoring Carol Amster

**the 2012 recipient of the Claire and Isadore Bernstein Leadership Award**
**The Award is presented to members of the Ann Arbor community who have made significant contributions to development and growth of Jewish Family Services and demonstrated outstanding community service.**

## Remembering Herb Amster

**Announcing the launch of a special campaign to fund The Herb Amster Center, a new division of JFS, which will create revenue-producing businesses to help fund Jewish Family Services' client care.**

**To give, go to jfsannarbor.org**

JFS Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

2245 S. State Street • Ann Arbor, MI 48104
www.jfsannarbor.org • 734-769-0209

The Herb Amster Center
A Division of Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

**Tickets for pre-concert reception are $50.**
To purchase or for more information, please go to www.jfsannarbor.org or contact Alice Miller at 734- 769-0209 or alice@jfsannarbor.org

University Musical Society ums

**Concert tickets** are sold through **UMS**
**(734) 764-2538** • For a **25%** discount, use this code at checkout: **JFS@UMS**
Must be purchased in advance; not valid on previously purchased tickets.

Scan with your smartphone for information about the concert series

at Jewish Family Services, 2245 South State Street. For more information, contact JFS at 769-0209 or email andre@jfsannarbor.org. *Ongoing.*

**Torah Trop: TBE.** Weekly group with Cantor Rose. Noon.

**Gardening Cub Series: JCC.** Three-part series of workshops, speakers, plant exchanges and garden tours. At this meeting, a guest gardener will discuss preparing your vegetable and flower gardens for spring and club members will share information about future events. $20 for three-class series; $30 for non-members. RSVP to Karen Freedland at karenfreedland@jccfed.org or phone 971-0990. 7 p.m.

## Tuesday 28

**"Money Matters–Jewish Business Ethics:" Jewish Learning Institute.** 9:30–11 a.m. at Chabad House and 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC. *Every Tuesday. See February 7.*

**SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors.** Energy Exercise with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m., $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Homemade Dairy Buffet Lunch, noon; Games and activities including mahjong, quilting for the patients of Mott Hospital, art projects and card games. 1 p.m. Wii sports including bowling, tennis, golf and baseball. No experience necessary. 1 p.m. Open computer time with a tutor available, 1 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

**Bible Literature and History Class: JCC Seniors.** Washtenaw Community College class taught by Dr. Lizabeth Fried. This semester's class will cover "Ezra in History and Tradition: Inquiry in to God's Justice." 10 a.m. *See February 7.*

**Yidish Tish (Yiddish Conversational Group).** All ages and levels welcome including UM and non-UM participants. 1:30 p.m. at Beanster's Café, ground floor of UM Michigan League. For information, call 936-2367.

**Hebrew 103: TBE.** 6:15–7:15 p.m.

**Weekly Torah Portion—for Women: Chabad.** Reading the Bible may be easy, but understanding it is no simple matter. Study the text in the original, together with the classical commentaries. 8:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

## Wednesday 29

**Lunch and Learn: BIC.** Bring a dairy lunch. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Noon.

### Weekly Friday night Shabbat services

**Shabbat Service: AAOM.** Services held at UM Hillel. Call 994-9258 in advance to confirm time.

**Shabbat Service: BIC.** 6 p.m.

**Shabbat Service: TBE.** Tot Shabbat at 5:30 p.m., followed by tot dinner. Sukkat Shalom service at 6:30 p.m. for "tot grads," preceded by dinner. Shira at 6:30 p.m. Oneg for Tot and Sukkat Shalom families at 7 p.m. Traditional Service at 7:30 p.m. Once a month Middle School Service at 7:30 p.m. For information, call 665-4744.

**Shabbat Service: Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah.** 6:15 p.m. at the JCC the last Friday each month. Musical Shabbat service followed by vegetarian potluck. Pizza nosh for the kids at 6:00 p.m. Childcare provided during the service. All are welcome to attend. For information, call 975-6527, email mamacohen@comcast.net, or visit www.aarecon.org.

**Shabbat Service: Chabad.** Begins at candle-lighting time. Home hospitality available for Shabbat meals and Jewish holidays. Call 995-3276 in advance.

### Weekly Shabbat services

**Shabbat Services: AAOM.** Morning service, 9:30 a.m. Evening service, 35 minutes before sunset. Call 662-5805 for information. Mincha/Ma'ariv with Seudah Shlisheet and Dvar Torah every week. Torah topics and a bite to eat. Discussions led by Rabbi Rod Glogower and other local scholars. Home hospitality available for Shabbat meals. UM Hillel.

**Shabbat Services: BIC.** 9:30 a.m. Morning childcare from 10 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

**Shabbat Services: AA Reconstructionist Havurah.** Learners' Service held first or second Saturday each month at the JCC from 10 a.m.–noon. Discussion-based format with changing topics, focusing on historical, geographical, and political traditions of different parts of traditional service each month. For info, email info@aarecon.org or call 913-9705 or visit www.aarecon.org.

**Shabbat Services: Chabad.** Morning services at 9:45 a.m. Afternoon services 45 minutes before sundown.

**Shabbat Services: Pardes Hannah.** Generally meets the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month. Call 663-4039 for more information. 10 a.m. Led by Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg.

**Shabbat Services: TBE.** Torah Study with Rabbi Levy at 8:50 a.m. Morning Minyan with Rabbi Delson and lay leaders at 9:30 a.m. Sanctuary Service at 10 a.m. most weeks. Call the office at 665-4744 or consult website at www.templebethemeth.org for service details.

**Home Hospitality for Shabbat and Holiday Meals: AAOM.** Call 662-5805 in advance.

**Home Hospitality and Meals: Chabad.** Every Shabbat and Holiday. Call 995-3276 in advance.

### Phone numbers and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

**Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM)**
1429 Hill Street 994-5822

**Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah (AARH)**
P.O. Box 7451, Ann Arbor 913-9705

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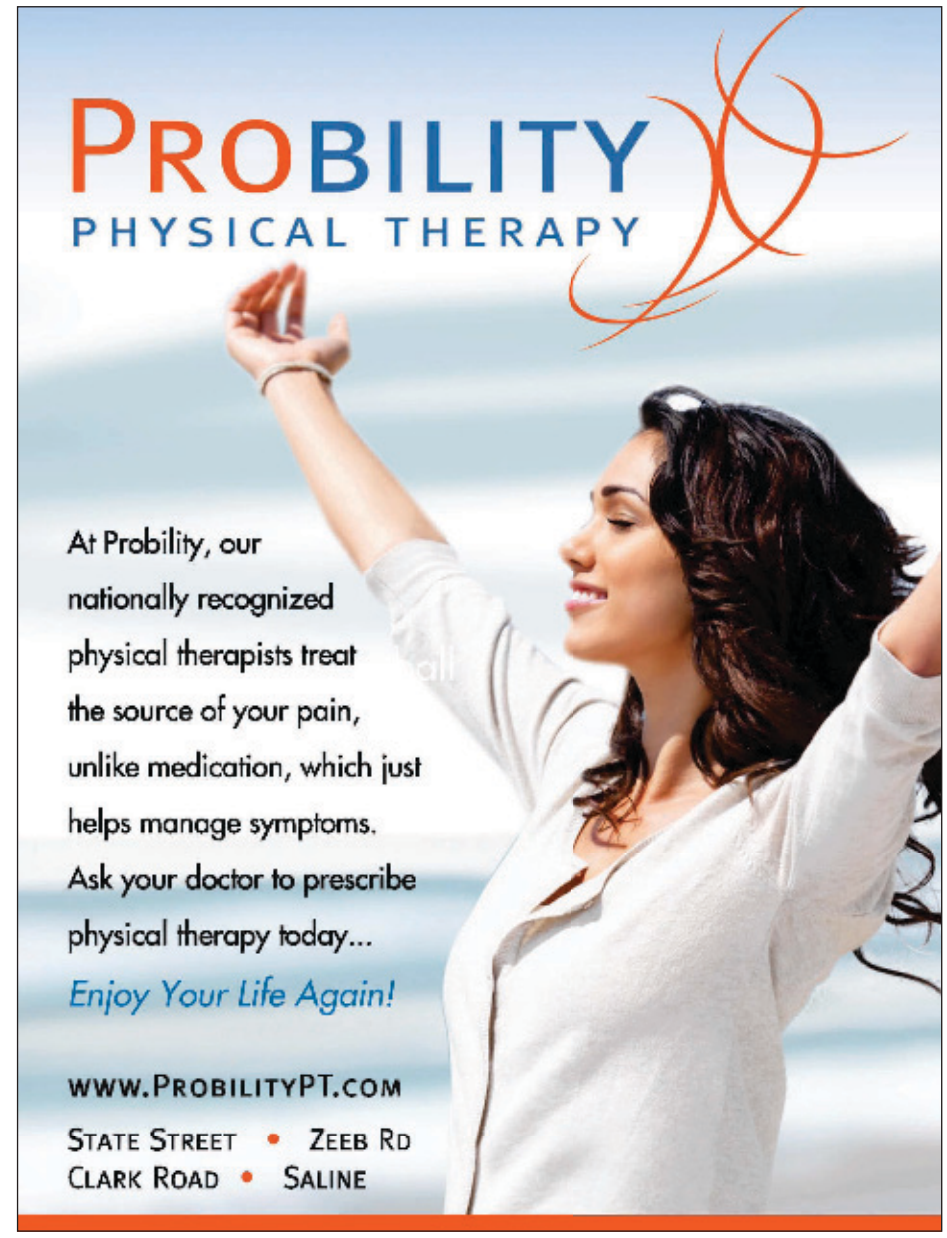
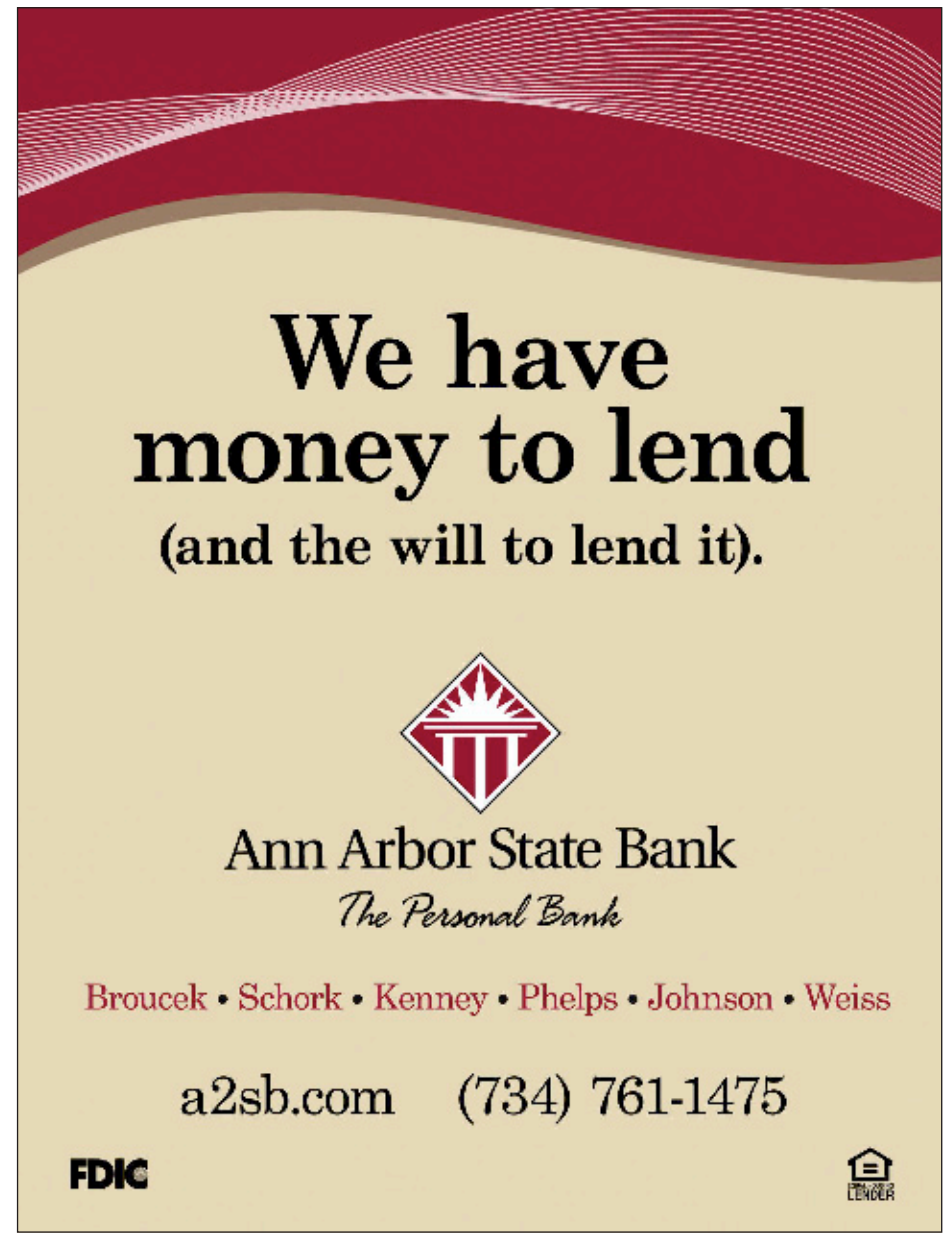
| | |
|---|---|
| February 3 | 5:33 pm |
| February 10 | 5:42 pm |
| February 17 | 5:51 pm |
| February 24 | 6 pm |



# The Audacity Of "Hope": Shalom Auslander's take on history and the Holocaust

*By Eric Herschthal*

NEW YORK (*N.Y. Jewish Week*) — When Shalom Auslander, a lapsed Orthodox Jew, came out with his wickedly funny memoir *Foreskin's Lament* in 2007, he was often mischaracterized as a New Atheist. It was clear he shared a similar disdain for religion with atheists like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, but he never declared himself a non-believer.

Rather, his memoir was a painfully comic testament to his faith, though with a twist: if God does exist, then he must be one cruel, uncaring and ruthless higher being. If God is so good, after all, how can he let death and destruction run rampant? We shouldn't be praising this being, he concluded; we should be cursing him all the way back behind his pearly gates.

Now Auslander is back with a new book, *Hope: A Tragedy*, his first novel, and he has taken on a new enemy: history. Specifically, the Holocaust. *Hope: A Tragedy* tells the story of Solomon Kugel, a secular Jew who has fled the urban chaos of Brooklyn and escaped to a bucolic enclave in upstate New York. He buys a cozy home with his wife and young son in the hope that all the troubles of the real world — his Holocaust-obsessed mother, his struggling writer sister, his whole Jewish past — will miraculously disappear.

Needless to say, they don't. The problems remain and they strike the Kugels with a vengeance: Solomon discovers Anne Frank holed up in his attic, embittered, well over 80, and working on a new book. Kugel's mother, who should have died weeks ago, returns to live with them, seeming to get a second wind when she meets the Holocaust author. And his sister keeps coming back, too, bringing along her sanguine Harvard professor husband, Pinkus Stephenor, a thinly guised send-up of the real Harvard scholar Steven Pinker.

"For me," Auslander told *The Jewish Week* in an interview at a Soho hotel, "the story was not so much about the Holocaust but how we all struggle with our history. … If [*Foreskin's Lament*] was about how you deal with an a—hole God, then this book is about how you deal with the viciousness of humanity once he's removed. The Holocaust is the big one that I had to deal with as a Jew, but it could have been any horrific event in the past."

Auslander litters his prose like he does his speech: with mountains of expletives. But it is easy to mistake the salty speech for inarticulateness. That's hardly the case. Like his novel, Auslander offers highly informed responses to life's most imponderable questions.

"Aristotle said that humans are the only species that laughs," Auslander said when discussing man's inhumanity to man. "Well, we're also the only species that created gas chambers. How do we deal with that?"

Auslander has a theory about how we deal with that particular piece of the past: We don't stop talking about it. "To quote my Anne Frank," he said, "There's a difference between never forgetting and never shutting the f—- up."

Kugel's mother represents this theory; she is so obsessed with the Holocaust that she actually believes she's a survivor (she isn't). Even when Pinkus Stephenor offers empirical evidence that, in fact, violent deaths have actually decreased over the last several centuries — a real argument made by Harvard psychologist Steven Pinkus in his current best-seller *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* — she cannot accept it.

"Nobody wants to hear that answer, which is fascinating in its own right," Pinkus Stephenor says in the novel. "But compared to life in the past — the everyday brutality and violence, the endless conflicts and bloodshed — well, the Holocaust wasn't so bad."

All this is couched as an elaborate parody, but Auslander liked the intellectual dissonance offered by the Pinkus character. "It was a perspective that was needed," he said. "Pinkus' whole point is that, even if we know, mathematically, that things are better, we still can't accept that. We want it to be bad."

Auslander also has little trouble breeching taboos. He found the very notion that people might consider his Holocaust conceit offensive, well, offensive.

"What's offensive? That I call Anne Frank a whore?" he said, referring to one of the many racy epithets he calls the diarist in the novel. "Holocaust denial is offensive. Patting ourselves, Israel, on the back because we finally recognized the Armenian genocide is offensive. I personally find Tim Tebow thanking God after every touchdown offensive. Is that going to stop him from doing it? No. And I'm not going to stop doing what I'm doing."

Geoff Kloske, Auslander's editor at Riverhead, which has published all his books, including his first, *Beware of God: Stories*, in 2005, has long known that Auslander courts detractors. "There will always be some readers who will never be comfortable with his work," he said. "You know it's part of his distinctive voice. But I really want people to understand and appreciate his work."

Kloske adds that "the most rewarding thing is when someone laughs and understands rather than gets offended."

Auslander grew up in an Orthodox home in upstate Monsey and graduated from a religious school. He dropped out of Queens College after a few weeks, immediately moved to Manhattan and started working as a writer at an advertising agency. He liked writing, and the money was good, but he didn't consider writing for himself until years later. His shrink suggested it, he said.

All along he was reading voraciously — Beckett, O'Connor, Roth, Celine — many of whom shared his darkly comic sensibility. As he began funneling their sensibilities through his own voice, story ideas began to emerge. He approached Kloske with an idea for a satire of the Bible — a sort of tabloid Torah that eventually turned into *Beware of God*, a collection of short stories.

After Auslander appeared on the Ira Glass NPR show "This American Life" to promote the book, Glass asked him back to contribute occasional on-air stories. Auslander quickly became part of the literary establishment. The New Yorker's editor, David Remnick, asked him to contribute pieces two years ago, then came The New York Times, The Guardian and GQ. But, Auslander says, "I'm the last person in the world I thought this would happen to. I just don't give a f—-."

As for his beef with the Holocaust, he says his problem stems from childhood. He remembers being shown footage of death camp survivors from the time he was about 7, with Holocaust education being hammered down his throat as incessantly as was the fear of God. The implicit lesson he took from it was: "The world hates you, so don't leave the fold," he said. He sees the Holocaust as (like God) another control mechanism meant to keep Jews together.

But when asked if his truculent attitude toward Judaism was a rejection of the whole culture, he was ready with a response: "I continue to be more observant than most secular Jews I know. Because I struggle with it, and because I think about it a lot more." His problem is not with the Jewish religion or culture per se, only with how they've been hijacked by many Jewish groups, be they secular right-wing Zionists or Orthodox Jews.

"The Chosen People? Probably the worst idea that any marketer every came up with," he said. "I see my Jewish tradition as a history of general s—- stirrers. Beginning with Abraham smashing idols, to Lenny Bruce and Woody Allen, there's a long line of people who said what if? Why not? They were the what-ifers, the questioners, the s—- stirrers. I like that tradition."

Auslander, 40, stopped being traditionally observant in his mid-20s. He married a secular Jewish woman and, like his fictional character Kugel, moved to upstate New York several years ago. He is raising his two children — Paix and Lux (French for "peace" and Latin for "light," respectively) — with a Jewish identity, but he refused to have them circumcised by a mohel.

Still, he wonders what he'll teach them about Judaism once they begin to ask questions about God or the Holocaust, having so thoroughly skewered the issues in his books. "I've written [a book about the Holocaust] now, and I still don't know what the f—- I'm going to tell them. I still haven't figured it out."

To be fair, "Hope: A Tragedy" does offers moments of repose, and some resolution, amid all the creative destruction. While the book is an extended rebuke of the idea of hope — a sort of secular god, in Auslander's telling — he realizes that it's something we cannot wish away.

"Some people will rewrite the past as better than it was, some people will rewrite it as worse," says one of Auslander's shrewder characters, a real estate broker named Eve. "But one way or the other, I promise you, fiction will return, if only because the nonfiction is too damned much to bear." ■

## *Genesis Humanitarian Award, continued from page 1*

that the $250,000 needed to establish the foundation was raised with the small 5, 10, 25 and 50 dollar donations.

A former colleague from the School of Public Health recalled her experiences as a new faculty member collaborating with Dr. Butter. She explained, "Irene's concern with fairness and equity greatly informed the direction of her research and teaching in public health. I felt very fortunate as a junior faculty member to have had such a mentor." Butter remained equally committed to her students. One student wrote she had mentioned to Butter that she would have to miss an important department meeting because she could not find a sitter for her newborn son. Butter responded, "You bring that baby. It's about time we heard some noise in these halls. We are in the department of maternal and child health, after all!" This student was able to attend this meeting and many others while Butter entertained the baby in her office. During this time Dr. Butter also served for a decade as an advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO), working to reverse the devastating brain drain of medical personnel from developing countries.

Butter's professional accomplishments are rivaled only by her involvement in public service. As the name of the new movie being produced about her life called "Never a Bystander" suggests, she has chosen the life of an activist: marching against the wars in Vietnam and Iraq; co-establishing Zeitouna, the biweekly dialogue group for Arab and Jewish women; co-developing the Three Wishes Project for local youngsters to hear the thoughts of Palestinian and Jewish children impacted by war; volunteering at the Back Door Food Pantry, Delonis Center and at Mitzvah Day; demonstrating against nuclear proliferation; participating in TBE's Generations After Group of Holocaust survivors and descendants who ensure "we will never forget;" and taking part in numerous TBE Social Action Committee activities.

Butter has devoted her life to service and a positive message after experiencing unimaginable losses as a child and young teenager in the Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps during the Holocaust. Butter speaks every year to hundreds of schoolchildren about this time in an uplifting and inspiring manner. One middle schooler wrote how Butter's visit impacted her life: "I learned that even in the darkest time a little ray of light can shine down and warm you with comfort…. She leaves a mark on your soul… and inspires you to do so much better than you are trying." ■

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# Vitals

## *Mazal Tov*

Dalit Kluger on her bat mitzvah on February 4.
Ido Morag on his bar mitzvah, February 4.
Samuel Solomon on his bar mitzvah, February 4.
Rephael Berkooz on his bar mitzvah, February 11.
Nancy and Martin Zimmerman on the birth of their granddaughter, Talia Hannah, daughter of Jonathan and Maya Zimmerman.
Ilana and Ari Gafni on the birth of their granddaughter, Nessa, daughter of Osnat and Greg Gafni-Pappas.
Gretta Spier and Jonathan Rubin on the engagement of their son, Josh Rubin, to Melissa Anne Runstrom.
Claire Weiner and Kirk Brower on the engagement of their son, Nathan Brower, to Talya Janoff.
Kathi and Rick Cohen on the engagement of their daughter, Becky Cohen, to Mike Gestwick.
Jesse Bernstein, on the birth of his grandson, Samuel Isaac Bernstein, born on December 22 to Ashley and Zach Bernstein.

## *Condolences*

Bon Rose Fine on the death of her brother, Jay Rosen, May 16, and on the death of her mother, Rhoda Rosen, October 20.
Lauren Mermelstein on the death of her mother, Bonnie Weil, November 3.
Bonnie Sarnoff on the death of her father, Lester Sarnoff, November 6.
Nikki Rosen on the death of her brother, Scott Eric Rosen, November 17.
Jerry Miller on the death of his father, Herman Miller, November 20.
Julie Halpert on the death of her father, Alvin L. Edelson, December 20.
Liz Fried on the death of her sister, Marjory Groce, December 23.
Robin Sedman on the death of her mother, Frances I. Sedman, January 1.
Ed DíAngelo on the death of his father, Rocco DíAngelo, November 28.
Rabbi Kim Blumenthal on the death of her grandmother, Constance Lokyitch, December 4.
Margery Adelson on the death of her husband, Joseph Adelson, December 9.
Judith Laiken Elkin on the death of her daughter, Susannah Elkin Zisk, December 11.
Beth Dwoskin on the death of her father, David Dwoskin, December 25.
Peretz Hirshbein on the death of his father, Omus Hirshbein, December 31.
Liz Fried on the death of her sister, Marjory Groce, December 23.
Steven Klein on the death of his father, Victor Klein, January 1.
Oran Hesterman on the death of his mother, Mildred Hesterman, December 28.

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## *Correction*

In the December/January issue of the *Washtenaw Jewish News*, Hebrew Day School students Corine Burgard and Lily Rosenberg were wrongly identified in the photos on page 15. Their names were switched around. Our apologies to both girls.

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